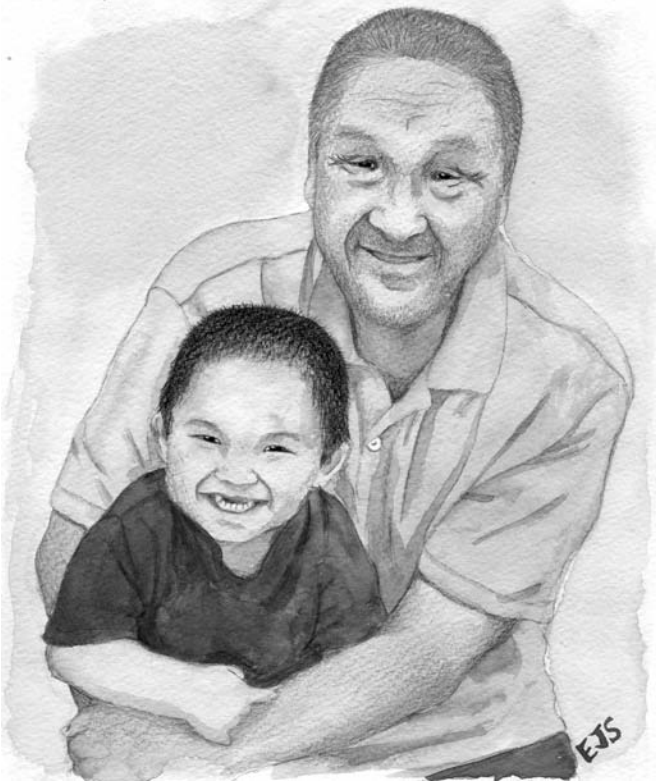


# The Compassionate Savior



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“When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matt. 9:36, NIV).

# Everyday Heroes

## INTRODUCTION

Luke 10:25–37

Twenty-seven years ago, a South African mother developed concern for a street child rummaging through bins for food in the town of Kwa-Zulu Natal. Taking pity on the disabled waif led to a lifetime of humanitarian work. From then on, Mother Leslie\* offered her house to other abandoned children.

Her care made the children comfortable; and they found love and peace in her home. When her house became too small to accommodate more children, Leslie arranged for land through the local chief, and the inspiration of this 60-year-old woman gave birth to a community center that now consists of a day-care center, an old-age home, and a seven-room school named after her. The center currently houses more than 130 abandoned children. In 1999, she was awarded the prestigious president's award for her humanitarian work. Though struggling with diabetes and partial blindness, Leslie—dubbed South Africa's Mother Teresa—can be happy in knowing that her efforts continue to help society's outcasts.

**Two people just passed by the man, who was on the brink of death.**

The good Samaritan assisted a man who had been attacked by robbers. Two people just passed by the man, who was on the brink of death. One of these was a priest. He avoided the man by crossing over to

the other side of the road. The Levite who came along also continued his journey without offering help.

Finally, the Samaritan came along. When he saw the injured man, his heart was filled with pity. He sacrificed his oil and wine to soothe the man's wounds. He offered him a ride on his donkey, taking him to the nearest inn, and arranging for the innkeeper to care for him. He even paid the bill. The good Samaritan and Mother Leslie not only boost our knowledge base but provide examples we can copy, for people in need are everywhere.

This week we are studying about the compassion of Christ. How did He minister to individuals and crowds in varying degrees of need? How did His humanitarian work improve the spiritual state of His subjects? Above all, what can we learn from Christ's compassion about spreading the gospel in a world full of varying physical, social, economic, and cultural backgrounds?

\*Leslie is a pseudonym.

# The “Human” Side of Christ

## EVIDENCE

Mark 5:35–42; Luke 2:52; John 1:46

How did Jesus become such a compassionate Savior? To discover the answer to this question, we need to look at the “*Sitz im Leben*”—His true “life situation.”

When Jesus was born, the world was deep in sin, and the community in which He grew up was what we today might call a slum (John 1:46). Thus, Jesus grew up in a place where His character was no doubt severely tested. However, the Bible is clear that as He grew, He developed strong powers of mind and body. He remained placid and patient and exercised compassion that did not sacrifice integrity.

We also read that Jesus did not receive an education from the rabbis, which typically repressed young minds (see *The Desire of Ages*, page 69). Instead, “His mother was His first human teacher. From her lips and from the scrolls of the prophets, He learned of heavenly things. The very words which He Himself had spoken to Moses for Israel He was now taught at His mother’s knee.”<sup>1</sup> Today, scientific research shows that when children have a good relationship with their mother, they are better able to show compassion toward others.<sup>2</sup>

He remained placid and  
patient. . . .

The Gospels are full of evidence regarding Jesus’ compassionate nature. Read one such story in Mark 5:35–42. Jesus always acted out of compassion for others. The people He helped the most were like the people He grew up with in Nazareth. They were the people whom the religious leaders of His day considered to be unclean. They were the people whom polite society took every precaution to avoid. Such compassion is true compassion, unspoiled by selfish motives.

## REACT

How can you make your personal ministry more compassionate? Why isn’t it possible to be truly compassionate without a strong relationship with Christ?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 70.

2. Institute for American Values, *Hardwired to Connect: The New Scientific Case of Authoritative Communities* (New York: Institute for American Values, 2003), p. 26.

Monday  
August 4

# The Compassionate Savior

## LOGOS

John 1:14; 3; 4; 9:1–7; Eph. 4:32; 1 John 2:12

### Unto Us a Savior Is Born (John 3; 4)

Centuries ago, Isaiah foretold a time of worldwide peace and the coming of a descendant of David who would be the ideal King (Isa. 9:6). The coming of Christ to a world under the curse of sin was to make the plan of redemption complete. It was the intention of God, through His love for humanity, to reconcile humankind to Him. Therefore, through His only Son Christ, God's love was made known to us, grace abounded where sin abounded, and the family of earth and the family of heaven were bound together in bonds of indissoluble union. As we look to Christ as the gateway to our salvation and eternal life, He will empower us to accept His message and to believe that God is truthful. We shall accept spiritual rebirth as part of ourselves, and have faith to help us claim His promises as we fulfill the gospel commission in Matthew 28:16–20.

### How Do You Identify? (John 1:14)

Because of the endless mischief of Satan, humanity was swayed off the right path that God had planned for them in the beginning. The nature of the world changed radically, demonstrating the effect of sin on the once beautiful planet. Hatred arose between brothers, and the once-

**Who could pay the price to  
redeem humankind?**

fertile ground became barren while some plants began to produce thorns.

However, seeing the end from the beginning, God did not tarry in His work of redemption. He looked around at all the heavenly hosts, and lo! Who could pay the price to redeem humankind? It was for this reason that Christ, the incarnate God, the light of heaven and earth, agreed to come down in human likeness. Contrary to the norms of the sinful world, He possessed no beauty that would make people desire Him. It may be difficult for us to imagine how Christ, with His position in heaven, could relegate Himself to the lowest of levels, to bear the pain we bear, and to encounter the problems we do day after day.

Interestingly, it is His character of sympathy, self-sacrifice, and voluntary service that provides an ideal example to help us understand the plan of redemption. He identified with us fallen humans, found Himself in our shoes, and endured pain and suffering the way we do. This means that Christ, suffering under abuse and

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insult, provided the best rationale for our work in ministry. His way of association and His method of training should be the hallmark of our service in ministry.

### **Total Forgiveness (Eph. 4:32; 1 John 2:12)**

If there is anything difficult for most people to do, it is to forgive. Many people talk about forgiveness time and again. But they fail to practice it. Forgiveness is part of God's character. He shows His forgiveness to us through His Son Jesus Christ. Truly, if God could apply His law to the letter, our first parents who disobeyed His word in the Garden of Eden would have died on the same day they sinned. The Bible records that God Himself said, "You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die" (Gen. 2:17, NIV).

However, our Father in heaven forgave all the bitterness, the passion, and the anger and gave His children a second chance to live. Christ intervened by providing His own life to die the second death and by bearing our own sins on the cross of Calvary. The ability to forgive and forget cannot take place in our lives if we don't adopt the style of the Person who initiated it. We should understand that forgiveness of any sin is consistent with God's justice and that only through Jesus, God's mercy was shown to us. But mercy does not do away with justice. The law shows us God's character, and nothing in the law can be changed to meet our fallen state. God cannot change His law, but He could sacrifice Himself in Christ for our salvation. And this He did. Read 2 Corinthians 5:19.

In order to escape the evil plans of Satan, we must emulate the forgiveness God has demonstrated to us through Christ. Let us become tenderhearted and forgive one another, just as God has forgiven our sins for the sake of Christ.

### **REACT**

1. As a Christian, how can you convince those outside of our faith to forgive as Christ forgives?
2. Think of a person you have had a difficult time forgiving. Then consider God's forgiveness toward you. Pray that God will help you to forgive this person.
3. Today's lesson states that Christ's character of sympathy, self-sacrifice, and voluntary service provides an ideal example to help us understand the plan of redemption. How is this so?
4. Consider how your part of the world needs to understand Christ's character. As Christians, we are to be like Him. How can you show your part of the world what your Savior is like?

# Christ: An Agent of Hope

## TESTIMONY

Col. 1:18

Like us, Christ lived in a world full of challenges. His immediate environment was full of people who did not understand Him and His work. With “their short measuring line, they could not fathom the mission which He came to fulfill, and therefore could not sympathize with Him in His trials. Their coarse, unappreciative words showed that they had no true perception of His character, and did not discern that the divine blended with the human. . . .

“These things made His path a thorny one to travel. So pained was Christ by the misapprehension in His own home that it was a relief to Him to go where it did not exist. . . . None on earth . . . could comprehend His divine mission, or know the burden which He bore in behalf of humanity. Often He could find relief only in being alone, and communing with His heavenly Father.”<sup>1</sup>

The very way Christ was misunderstood is the same way we may experience rejection and disappointment in our efforts to minister to various communities and individuals. However, whatever conditions and circumstances impede our work, we should allow the Holy Spirit to grow within us the compassion of Christ.

“Those who are called to suffer for Christ’s sake, who have to endure misapprehension and distrust, even in their own home, may find comfort in the thought that Jesus has endured the same. He is moved with compassion for them. He bids them find companionship in Him, and relief where He found it, in communion with the Father.”<sup>2</sup>

Those “who accept Christ as their personal Saviour are not left as orphans, to bear the trials of life alone. He receives them as members of the heavenly family; He bids them call His Father their Father. They are His ‘little ones,’ dear to the heart of God, bound to Him by the most tender and abiding ties.”<sup>3</sup>

Understanding Christ’s experiences make us strong in our work for Him. He is our example, our role model, as we witness for Him in all that we do.

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 326.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 327.

3. *Ibid.*

# The ABC's of Christ's Ministry

## HOW-TO

Matt. 9:36

What formed the character of Christ that made Him excel in ministry? And what can we learn from His character that can help us to be successful?

1. *No-boundary service (Matt. 28:19)*. Christ's work was not limited by boundaries. He sailed the waters and walked on land to accomplish the work He came to do. From Los Angeles to Manila, from South Africa to Denmark, the gospel must be preached across our planet.

2. *Sympathy and compassion (Matt. 9:36)*. Jesus had great compassion and sympathy for all people. He was struck by their felt needs. He provided for their real needs. We also need sympathy and compassion to help us minister to people the way Christ did. We cannot truly win the interest of a person until we are sympathetic to their joys, sorrows, needs, and wants. The same harassed and helpless crowds are still with us in prisons, hospitals, war-torn regions, and regions of the world struck by natural disasters. They are in our own cities and neighborhoods. Do they see Christ in us?

3. *Social kindness (Gal. 3:28)*. We cannot deliver the gospel if we want to pick and choose whom we will share it with. The religious leaders of Christ's time often accused Him of associating with "the wrong kind of people." Like Him, we must be willing to share the gospel with everyone, regardless of their race, color, or creed.

Do they see Christ in us?

4. *Dependence on God and His Word (Heb. 4:12)*. The source of Christ's power always was from God the Father and His Word. Only through such dependence did Christ resist the power of temptation. Therefore, "when assailed by temptation, look not to circumstances or to the weakness of self, but to the power of the word. All its strength is yours." "Jesus rested upon the wisdom and strength of His heavenly father."\*

5. *Risk-taking (Luke 2:1-20)*. In a world filled with Satan's dominion, Christ agreed to be "God with us" (Isa. 9:6, 7). He risked His life for our sake. He risked being tempted so we could have eternal life. In our ministry, we must be willing to risk our dearest possessions for His sake. Read Matthew 10:39.

\**The Desire of Ages*, p. 123.

Thursday  
August 7

# More Healing Than Preaching

## OPINION

John 9:1–7

In dealing with the man born blind, we notice that Christ's ministry does not consist of preaching alone. He understood His environment and the perils that prevailed at any given time and place. He also knew for sure that it was sin causing all the suffering of the world. Therefore, He devoted most of His time ministering to people and their needs. This method should be the model for our witness today.

In the face of hardship, toil, poverty and human degradation, there are millions of souls yearning for sympathy and little acts of kindness. "In our own families may be souls hungry for sympathy, starving for the bread of life. There may be children to be trained for Christ. There are heathen at our very doors. Let us do faithfully the work that is nearest. Then let our efforts be extended as far as God's hand may lead the way. The work of many may appear to be restricted by circumstances; but, wherever it is, if performed with faith and diligence it will be felt to the uttermost parts of the earth."\*

**This is the essence of the  
gospel work.**

No matter who you are, whatever you do, or where you live, there is something you can do to draw a soul to Christ. Look around, and you will see those who will count on you as

a stepping-stone to finding their way to Him. If we obey Christ's command to go into all the world (Mark 16:15), we will lift up our eyes to regions beyond, clothe ourselves with His character, and tear away the wall of partition dividing prejudice, just as He did in His ministry.

The same Christ who imparted His life to the sick and the afflicted, and who proclaimed deliverance to the captives of Satan, is the same Christ who commissions us to go into the entire world. He is always there for us to the end of time. Let us heal the world of its spiritual disease as well as its physical maladies. This is the essence of the gospel work—to restore the sick, the helpless, and the afflicted, to take hold of our Savior's strength as the living force that transforms all.

## REACT

1. Based on this week's lesson, define *compassion*.
2. Christ exercised compassion in the face of great odds, especially poverty. If someone is born into a rich family and knows nothing about suffering, how can that person still be compassionate?

\**The Desire of Ages*, p. 822.

# Concrete Compassion

## EXPLORATION

Matt. 9:36; Heb. 4:15, 16

## CONCLUDE

Christ's whole life was characterized by compassion. Every act from the moment the Word became flesh and dwelt among us to His excruciating death on the cross was motivated by love and sympathy for weak, lost human beings. Even now, Jesus' high priestly ministry is one of sympathy, mercy, and grace. How much more could we reflect His love, reaching out in care, compassion, and understanding to those around us?

## CONSIDER

- Reading through the gospels and using a certain color to highlight every verse that speaks of Christ's compassion.
- Supporting a ministry of compassion like sponsoring a child or donating to an orphanage.
- Reading (or rereading) *The Hiding Place* by Corrie ten Boom, asking yourself what gave the ten Booms the courage to be compassionate and the ability to forgive after being imprisoned in a concentration camp.
- Sending an encouraging card to someone who needs compassion.
- Writing out the dictionary definitions of *compassion* and *sympathy*. Then paraphrase them in your own words.
- Listening to Michael Card's song "Forgiving Eyes" as you picture the woman caught in adultery experiencing Christ's compassion.
- Acting out one or more of Christ's healings for your Sabbath School class. Focus on portraying the compassion Jesus felt for the people in the story.

## CONNECT

Keith Burton, *The Compassion of the Christ*; Vision Video, *Journey Toward Forgiveness*; International Bible Society, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (video).