

“Merciful and Compassionate”
Matthew 20:29-34

2/28/10

9 & 10:45 am

Series “*Beyond Compare*”

INTRODUCTION

One of the prominent characteristics of Jesus’ life and ministry was that He healed people.

Speaking to the disciples of John the Baptist, Jesus said of Himself, **“The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.”** (Matthew 11:5)

From the many different accounts of healings in the Gospels, I think we can easily say that Jesus healed thousands of people – blind, lame, deaf, people w/ leprosy, paralysis, those unable to speak, those with various kinds of illnesses and diseases. He also brought some people back to life who had died.

As we look again at the characteristics of Jesus’ life and ministry, we realize that God’s plan is that we become more and more like Jesus. How does **this** dimension of His ministry apply to us? Is this one, being a healer, one that God gives us a pass on? Does He really expect us to heal just like Jesus healed?

Let’s see what God may want us to learn from this amazing quality of Jesus.

OPEN to Matthew 20:29 (**PAGE** 1531)

READ Matthew 20:29-34

I. A Request for Mercy (Matthew 20:29-30)

Matthew 20:29-30 **“As Jesus and His disciples were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed Him.**

30 Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was going by, they shouted, ‘Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!’

Sitting along the side of the road, two blind men hear a great crowd of people coming, and part of what they hear is people saying the name of Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth. They realize He’s coming down the road towards them.

They have heard about Jesus. We know this because they call Him **“the Son of David.”** That’s a Jewish way of saying “the Messiah.” They call Jesus the promised Messiah and He’s coming their way.

They have heard a lot about Him that makes them believe He is the Messiah. The way He talks about God, the authority with which He teaches, and what He has done. Especially the miracles: lame people walking, deaf people hearing, paralytics moving about freely, those who are demonized set free, and those who were blind having their sight completely restored.

The anticipation in their hearts is overwhelming. Maybe they have been praying and hoping for things to happen like this. They have come to believe He is the Messiah, and they know He can heal.

So, they cry out to Him for mercy. Mercy.

“Have mercy on us, Lord, Son of David!”

They are pleading for mercy. (imperative mood).

Notice that they aren’t saying, “You healed other people, you have to heal us too. Fair is fair!”

They don’t try to muscle Jesus, or make Him feel obligated. They plead for mercy.

What is mercy?

“To show kindness or concern for someone in serious need.”

(Greek-English Lexicon of NT Words Based on Semantic Domains)

Not just feelings of compassion or pity, but acting upon that concern or need.

When someone asked Jesus for mercy, they were asking Him to meet a significant need:

Matthew 9:27 **“As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, ‘Have mercy on us, Son of David!’”**

Matthew 15:22 **“A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to Him, crying out, ‘Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession.’”**

Matthew 17:15 **“Lord, have mercy on my son,” he said. “He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water.”** (demonized child)

It wouldn’t be an exaggeration to say that wherever Jesus went, people pleaded for mercy.

The needs were great. People's situations were such that they couldn't help themselves. They needed someone to have mercy on them, someone to show kindness and concern for them by meeting their need.

We are in a similar day. Even with modern medicine, there are physical problems that cannot be healed, people are still demonized, people with mental and emotional illness are visible on our streets. And they *still* cry out for *mercy*.

ILLUSTRATION

"I was riding the crowded subway in New York City. Every 10 to 15 seconds or so, someone behind me shouted unintelligible words. The first time, I ignored them. After several outbursts, however, I turned around to see that they were coming from a scruffy-looking man behind me.

Sitting fairly close to him was a woman reading a newspaper. As I watched, he reached out, touched her knee, and quickly brought his hand back. Not getting any response, he did it again a few seconds later. It seemed like a game a small child might play; each time, his face showed that he was pretending not to have touched her. No one said anything, but those sitting near him exchanged nervous glances and began to inch away. I was caught off guard by what happened next. The woman put down her paper and looked at the man. I expected her to rebuke him. Instead, she politely engaged the man in conversation. 'Do you know where your stop is?'

He nodded that he did.

'Do you need any help getting to where you need to go?'

He shook his head no.

I don't know what motivated this woman to treat a stranger on the subway with such kindness. But the way she asked these questions showed that she was genuinely concerned for his welfare. She chose to respond to him as a real person with real needs, not just as an annoyance on her commute." (Chuck Broughton, "Reflecting God's Nature.")

But, what we read of next is anything but merciful ...

II. An Unmerciful Response (Matthew 20:31)

READ v. 31a: "**The crowd rebuked them and told them to be quiet ...**"

How could the crowd be so unfeeling, harsh?

They responded this way because of what they believed (John 9:1-3, 34)

In this era, people with grave illness or handicaps were considered under God's punishment because of their sin or their parents' sin.

John 9:1-3 **"As He went along, He saw a man blind from birth.
2 His disciples asked Him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?'
3 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned,' said Jesus, 'but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.'"**

Then Jesus healed him. This became public knowledge and **the work of God was displayed in his life** as everyone found out what happened.

Later in the story, the Pharisees say to this man, "**You were steeped in sin at birth**" (v. 34).

The two blind men were told to shut up, to quiet down because God made them blind to punish them for sin.

So, they didn't deserve mercy.

Can you see how important it is that we believe properly about God and His view of people who are suffering in various kinds of ways?

It's so important that we don't substitute our feelings and thoughts for God's feelings and thoughts. So important that we are transformed more and more into the image of Jesus by the renewing of our minds; by exposing our minds to what He clearly expresses in His Word.

We can't heal at will, like Jesus did. But, we can be merciful; we can demonstrate compassion.

Next we see the mercy of Jesus for these two blind men ...

III. Jesus Gives Mercy and Compassion (Matthew 20:32-34)

READ v. 32: "Jesus stopped and called them. 'What do you want Me to do for you?' He asked.

33 'Lord,' they answered, 'we want our sight.'

34 Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed Him."

The blind men pleaded for mercy.

Jesus called to them, and asked, “**What do you want Me to do for you?**”

Jesus asked what they wanted Him to do. They said they wanted to see.

When they expressed their request, Jesus felt compassion: “**to feel deep sympathy.**”
(BKC)

And He healed them. Their eyes went from darkness to light in a moment of time.
Amazing!

APPLICATION IDEAS:

I cannot heal like Jesus healed, but I can show mercy and compassion, and do what I can do. And, in that way, I can be a healer.

1. Demonstrate mercy and compassion, even when you can't solve the problem

Sometimes we don't try to meet a need because we know we can't solve the person's whole problem. That can make us feel frustrated or helpless, or like we're wasting our time.

Economic thought. Rather than relational thought.
Do what you can and should do.

“I am only one; but (still) I am one. I cannot do everything, but (still) I can do something. I will not refuse to do the something I can do.” ~ Helen Keller

2. Use whatever you have

In Luke 10:25-37 we find the story of The Good Samaritan.

A man is mugged and left half-dead by thieves.

Priest: offered no help
Levite: offered no help

“But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity (*compassion*) on him.” (Luke 10:33)

Good Samaritan: to show mercy and compassion, it cost him time and money. It put him behind schedule, it cost him lodging for two for the first night, and he left behind **“two silver coins.”** A silver coin was a denarius, a day’s pay. He spent more than two day’s pay to care for this stranger and then told the innkeeper he’d pay more upon his return if more was required.

What started this story was a religious leader asking Jesus, **“Who is my neighbor?”**

At the end of the story Jesus asked him, “Which one of the three men was a neighbor to the man in need?”

Luke 10:37 **“The expert in the law replied, ‘The one who had mercy on him.’ Jesus told him, ‘Go and do likewise.’”**

Answer: Help whoever you can who’s in need.

It cost the Samaritan time, money, inconvenience.

Mercy and compassion always cost something.

- When I think of people who are homebound: we can visit them, encourage, write a card, take shopping, invite out, make a phone call
- There are people in rest homes who never receive visitors. We have an on-going ministry in a few of the rest homes.
- There are young men and women in juvenile hall. Adults in prison. Visit, pray with, etc.
- There are people who would love for someone to teach them to read.
- When our public schools finish their budget cuts, there’s going to be a great number of needs that volunteers can fill helping children. Helping children.

3. Make compassion a part of your lifestyle

Let’s say you’re involved in two Bible studies a week, and you’re here both hours Sunday mornings, maybe even Sunday evening.

When a need arises to help someone, you don’t feel you have the time because you’re too busy getting ready for Bible Studies or your Sunday class or going to them

- volunteer for MNC (feeding the hungry)
- volunteer in a community organization that helps people in need.

- there is a spiritual gift of mercy. Ask God to show you how to use it, maybe ask Him to lead you to others who have this gift so you can figure out how to use it.

CONCLUSION

I can't heal like Jesus healed, but I can be a healer. I can give mercy and compassion to people in need.

In the Gospel of John, he often refers to Jesus' miracles as **“miraculous signs.”**
“Miraculous signs.”

Jesus' miracles were signs pointing to Himself so that people would believe He was the Son of God, the Savior of the world.

Jesus didn't just want a world of more healthy people. He also wanted those people to believe in Him so they could live for eternity with Him.

Just as Jesus showed mercy in healing, He showed it in rescuing us from our sins:

Ephesians 2:4-5a **“But because of His great love for us, God, Who is rich in mercy, 5a made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions...”**

1 Timothy 1:13a, 16 **“Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy ... 16 ... I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display His unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on Him and receive eternal life.”**

Titus 3:5a **“He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy.”**

“Lord Jesus, thank You for pouring out Your mercy on me. Please use me as a channel of Your mercy and compassion! In Your name I pray, Amen.”