

Ministry of Compassion

June 14, 2020

Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church Pastor Labuhn

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

Over the past couple of weeks, as the crowds continued to gather to demonstrate around the world, something began to happen. Those in authority began to access needed change, but still, there was one thing that became evident to me, there was a felt need for compassion. And while Webster's dictionary defines compassion as *a sympathetic consciousness of others' distress - together with a desire to alleviate it...*there seemed to be evidence of a great outpouring of compassion in the middle of all those who gathered.

But then again, that also seems to be the case in our Gospel reading for today as well. Beginning in Matthew 9:35, we read that Jesus went through towns and villages teaching in synagogues, preaching the good news that the Kingdom of God was near. So that they might know that what He said had authority, He healed every kind of disease and sickness. As you can imagine, crowds started to gather around Him, and in verse 36, it tells us that He had compassion on them - they were harassed and helpless, like sheep who were lost without a shepherd.

Jesus sees callous and hardened hearts. He sees the overwhelming need for compassion. So, ***"He said to His***

disciples, ‘the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest, to send out laborers into his harvest.’” (v.37,38) The disciples He sent became His twelve apostles. Sending them out two by two, He gave to them His divine authority over unclean spirits, in order to cast them out, and heal every disease and every affliction. Still, nothing about them would really equip them for such a task, except the faith that had been given to them.

Even today, there is still a need for a ministry of compassion. The callous disregard of our civil laws, life, and property seem to be common among some people because hardened hearts continue to reveal themselves both in words and actions. This isn't just found in police officers but in many others as well. Because if we're honest with ourselves, we can identify with the prophet Isaiah who once said, ***“Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips...”***(Isaiah 6:5) Because if we're honest with ourselves, our own words and actions reveal that hearts aren't always full of compassion either.

Through His Word and actions, Jesus continues to reveal His heart to us. He sees our sickness. He sees the disease that plagues and just how lost we are and our great need for compassion. And so, He willingly dies for us on the cross so that through His life and resurrection, we can be forgiven all our sins and healed from all of the sickness and disease that plagues us. It's through Him and His ministry that we become whole once again. And yet, Jesus wants all

people to know of His salvation, because ***“the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.”*** (Matthew 10:7)

By faith, you have been called into Jesus’ ministry of compassion. Once we were all harassed and helpless, like a sheep lost without a shepherd in a hard and callous world. It began when the twelve Apostles were sent out two by two in order to reach the lost sheep of the house of Israel. This became valuable training for the apostles, who after Pentecost would go out into all the world to proclaim the Good News of our Lord, Jesus Christ. And yet, through our baptism into Jesus’ death and resurrection, as well as by the Holy Spirit, each of us is called in one way or another to this ministry of compassion.

Even though we shouldn’t expect compassion from those around us, each of us has been equipped by His Word and His actions to help meet the need of compassion felt by so many. If we simply open our eyes of faith, as we go about our lives, we can see the many opportunities that we have to share in this ministry. There is a great felt need for compassion by so many in our world today. All we need to do is to share the compassion that we ourselves have received by our Lord Jesus with those around us. The Kingdom of Heaven is still at hand, and yet when we join in this ministry together, Our Savior’s Way will fulfill its mission which is to glorify God and make disciples by: Forming relationships, Experiencing Jesus together and Sharing God’s love.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.