



Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. AMEN!

Do you remember our word for last week's sermon? "Pressure". God will walk with you to help you fend off negative temptations or the pressures of the world. So always choose Jesus. Well, this week we have a couple important verbs that jumped out at me as I read the text for today. And they were certainly way more positive, at least I took them that way. They are rest, compassion, and touch.

This story may be familiar to you:

A two-year-old boy was tired and fretful, all out of sorts and so was his mother. It was an unusually trying day. Nothing was going right for them. As the day wore on things became even worse. To him everything seemed to go wrong. Mom was yelling at him at every turn. It seemed that life had become one big mountain of frustration.

Finally, towards the end of the day, when he could not take any more, he toddled over to the telephone, took the receiver off the cradle and without dialing anything, said to nobody in particular, but in a voice of despair, of wanting of desiring some tender loving care, "Give me my Daddy, please."

The two-year-old boy wanted his Daddy to rescue him from the frustrations, all the hurts, all the trouble, and all the brokenness he was feeling in his life. He needed someone else besides his mother to turn to. He needed someone to bring some needed change into his life. He needed someone to care for his feeling, his hurts, his inability to handle the challenges or pressures of life, so he asks, "Give me my Daddy, please!"

Sure, sounds like mom needed a **rest**, some time away from the routine, since she had been working so hard day after day. The little boy needed a mother's **touch** but not finding it he sought out **compassion** from his daddy.

Jesus was at first concerned about his disciples. Remember, He had sent them out two by two to teach. They had just returned from their mission to give testimonies about Jesus to anyone who

would listen. They reported to Jesus what they had done, and He could certainly see that they were tired. Jesus tells them to rest. God's work can be exhausting even today. Rest is a Sabbath principle. God rested on the seventh day of creation. Our need for rest is in our DNA. We need to take time out to listen to our coach, Jesus. Jesus did take time out to rest, so you needn't feel guilty to take time away from the pressures of life in this world.

In our Gospel reading for this morning, great crowds came to Jesus with the attitude that they needed someone to care for them. They needed healing. When the people saw Jesus, they ran to him with all their aches, pains, frustrations, and troubles of their lives. And Jesus cured many people. After all, He is bigger than all our needs and so throngs of people come to Him. Jesus saw that they needed Him. They needed someone with compassion for their plight. These sheep needed a caring leader or as our reading says, "They were like sheep without a shepherd." They needed a shepherd. We need a shepherd.

To me, the most important verse in our gospel text for this morning is verse 34, where we are told that, "He had compassion for them." Jesus had compassion for the people, for all people.

What does compassion mean? The dictionary says, "Compassions is a feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for another who is stricken by misfortune, accompanied by a strong desire to alleviate the suffering." Synonyms of compassion are commiseration, mercy, tenderness, and heart. And doesn't that just sound just like Jesus. He had concern for their suffering. He had mercy, tenderness of heart and he gave forgiveness for sins. These things led to His alleviating the suffering of the people.

A story from Brian Cavanaugh from his book [The Sower's Seed](#).

It was a bitter, cold evening in northern Virginia many years ago. The old man's beard was glazed by winter's frost while he waited for a ride across the river. The wait seemed endless. His body became numb and stiff from the frigid north wind.

He heard the faint, steady rhythm of approaching hooves galloping along the frozen path. Anxiously, he watched as several horsemen rounded the bend. He let the first one pass by without an effort to get his attention. Then another passed by, and another. Finally, the last rider neared the spot where the old man sat like a snow statue. As this one drew near, the old man caught the rider's eye and said, "Sir, would you mind giving an old man a ride to the other side? There doesn't appear to be a passageway by foot."

Reining his horse, the rider replied, "Sure thing. Hop aboard." Seeing the old man was unable to lift his half-frozen body from the ground, the horseman dismounted and helped the old man onto the horse. The horseman took the old man not just across the river, but to his destination, which was just a few miles away.

As they neared the tiny but cozy cottage, the horseman's curiosity caused him to inquire, "Sir, I notice that you let several other riders pass by without making an effort to secure a ride. Then I came up and you immediately asked me for a ride. I'm curious why, on such a bitter winter night, you would wait and ask the last rider. What if I had refused and left you there?"

The old man lowered himself slowly down from the horse, looked the rider straight in the eyes, and replied, "I've been around these here parts for some time. I reckon I know people pretty good." The

old-timer continued, "I looked into the eyes of the other riders and immediately saw there was no kindness or compassion for my situation. It would have been useless even to ask them for a ride. But when I looked into your eyes, kindness and compassion were evident. I knew, then and there, that your gentle spirit would welcome the opportunity to give me assistance in my time of need."

Those heartwarming comments touched the horseman deeply. "I'm most grateful for what you have said," he told the old man. "May I never get too busy in my own affairs that I fail to respond to the needs of others with kindness and compassion."

With that being said, Thomas Jefferson turned his horse around and made his way back to the White House.

When the people looked into Jesus' eyes they saw the same thing, kindness, and compassion. As Jesus was growing up, He saw the human condition all around him. He saw sickness. He saw death. He saw poverty. He saw broken relationships. He saw it all. So, when His ministry began, he already had developed the compassionate heart that was needed. And he was then on his way to do something about the human condition. He healed the sick. He gave support to the grieving. He told the people that God loved them always, even during their darkest hours.

As the huge crowds followed Jesus, he did not send them away, but he had compassion on them. And that is our lesson to learn. Luther said, "To love means to bear another's burdens. Christians must have strong shoulders to bear the burdens of their fellow Christians." To do as Jesus did is our response to the great love and compassion of God. Remember that God is always with us, and we should be present in trying times for our neighbors, as well.

Jesus had the ultimate compassion for all of us as he went to the cross and faced an ugly death. He gave His life for us, so that we could have forgiveness of our sins, abundant and eternal life. Our God's compassion was present in giving up His only Son for us so that we might have the promise of salvation. God's love is so large that it extends compassion to all those who ask and who believe.

And with all that being said, all anyone had to do in the second half of our story today is touch. Verse 56 says, "and begged him that they might touch the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched him were healed."

It did not matter the ailment; Jesus healed all things. Disease, mental and physical. Today we still look to Jesus to save us from ourselves, our sins. What a simple touch can do? Imagine if you could just touch Jesus cloak today? Can you imagine it? No more pain, no more suffering, and things would be perfect. That is heaven, folks, when will be healed from our mortality.

The Lord is our shepherd, and He will give you rest. Our awesome God gives us the opportunity to rest from our daily work, to have time for him in prayer or reading his word, to listen for his voice, His call, and build us up to be the messengers of the Good News of the Gospel.

Our awesome God does give us all we need. He fills us with grace and mercy. God has great love for all his children. Great compassion for you and for me. God will always reach out and touch us with His love. So please, let God touch your heart, be your shepherd, rest and renew in His grace and He will have compassion on us all. AMEN