

## Perspective & Compassion

Sympathetic concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others...

Who has heard of Mother Teresa?

This woman of God has a tremendous capacity for compassion. In this way she reflected Jesus to a lost and hurting world. On one occasion she said: ““We have drugs for people with diseases like leprosy. But these drugs do not treat the main problem, the disease of being unwanted. That’s what my sisters hope to provide. The sick and poor suffer even more from rejection than material want. Loneliness and the feeling of being unwanted is the most terrible poverty.”

When we think of poverty, what comes immediately to mind? Do we see the homeless man diving in the dumpster for bottles? Do we see a drug addict? Do we see an alcoholic? Do we see the person begging for food on the side of the street? Do we see someone lesser than ourselves? Do we see someone unworthy of our time?

I think Mother Teresa had it right when she defined poverty. Poverty is not the lack of possessions, I have seen some people quite rich in material goods, but impoverished of spirit.

Consider the rich woman who marries a man thinking that he cares for her, her needs and so on. If her husband only married her for her money, is she rich or impoverished in her relationship. Now consider the homeless couple under the bridge. He went to war and got PTSD and can't seem to hold down a job. She has no marketable skills and never finished high school. They sometimes don't eat. They sometimes struggle to get warm, but they have an undying love that glints in their eyes as they look at each other. They support each other and talk to each other.

What is our perspective on whom the rich person is?

The woman with everything that money can buy including friends and a spouse  
or  
The man with nothing that money can buy, but the love of a faithful and caring woman.

This morning, how do we define prosperity?

What are we focusing our thoughts on in this consumeristic society? Where are we placing what we value? How do we determine what is valuable and what is not?

Am I worrying about buying that next guitar, that next gun, that next truck, the next investment, a bigger house, more prestigious friends and so on... or alternatively am I taking Philippians 4:8 seriously wherein it says:

*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think on these things.*

Are we conditioned to look at the negative? Do we miss the positives?

Bob I hope you don't mind but I would like to use a situation involving you as an example...

Bob recently found out that his operation date has been cancelled. He has been looking forward to being out of pain and getting this procedure done. He has been suffering but had an end in sight given to him that he could hold on to but was taken away because of an infection in the hospital...

How would you feel this morning if you were in constant pain and were given an end date for that suffering and it was pulled out from underneath you?

Right now who has compassion for the situation?  
What would you feel like if you were him this morning?

So I spoke to Bob and he didn't complain about it. Nope, he didn't get angry. My friend said to me: "I am thankful that I didn't go in there and get that infection, God is looking out for me. It is what it is"

This morning, he could be mad about the cancellation, he could rail on about the competence of the cleaning staff. He could be negative about ever getting in... But instead there was a choice that happened... He looked beyond the frustration and the pain to see that God had protected him by revealing the infectious operating facilities before he went in.

What was our perspective this morning?  
I don't care this has nothing to do with me  
or  
Poor Bob as he has to suffer in pain for longer with no end in sight  
or  
Praise God because he spared Bob a postoperative infection?

Don't get me wrong we can be compassionate towards his situation and support him where necessary, but what I want to illustrate this morning is his perspective...

When I asked him it wasn't poor me, it was I am blessed not to be put at risk.

When we are struggling are we looking at what we are missing or are we celebrating what we aren't

Abraham Lincoln once said: "We can complain because rose bushes have thorns or we can rejoice because thorn bushes have roses"

Let me go back to the homeless man, who in my mind is far richer than the rich lonely man. I want to see God's perspective here:

Matthew 6:19-21

*"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"*

This morning what is of value to you?

Christmas is just around the corner and people are getting busy with family and buying gifts etc. I love getting gifts at Christmas, not because of their financial value but because someone thought about me in a loving way.

Do we value our relationships with others more than our stuff?

When we see a person who is struggling, do we simply shut off our hearts because we have too much to deal with already? Has our society come to the place where we are so focused on accumulation of stuff or on self that we don't even have time to feel compassion for the hurting?

Don't get me wrong, I know that life can take its toll on each of us... Sometimes you don't want to think about it because you simply can't take anymore. We are so busy making ends meet that we are burned out and exhausted and just too weary for well doing...

What have we lost?

What are we prioritizing?

Search your hearts... What is most important to you this morning?

When I was considering these questions this week, Matthew 25:40 came to mind: "The King will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me"

God is watching us to see his compassion shared with a lost and broken world. He doesn't need us to judge it, that's his role. He needs us to show the world his love.

When we see someone suffering or hurting, it is true all we may be able to do is say hello and listen, but extend the compassion of Christ through you and watch the miracles happen.

Let me summarize the sermon this morning...

Have a heavenly perspective not an earthly one so that you do not become weary in well doing. We must value people and emotions over the acquisition of things. We must be compassionate and take the time to care. It is what we are called to do.