

Date: August 2, 2026 (Pentecost 10)

1. Texts: Genesis 32:22-31; Ps. 17:1-7, 16; Romans 9:1-5; Matthew 14:13-21.
2. Subject: ministry.
3. Topic: the necessity of active compassion.
4. Aim: motivate.
5. Proposition: "Jesus' compassion drove him to action."

ACTIVE COMPASSION

The Bible is the authoritative library of God's dealings with his chosen people, the Jews.

Jesus is God inside time, space and human experience.

When we combine these two fundamental truths in our own lives, we discover God's will and model for our lives as disciples of Jesus.

We need to know this. We need to learn, mark and inwardly digest this. Our identity and existence as Christians is wholly dependent on these realities. The Bible is God's authoritative library. Jesus is God inside time, space and human experience. Our Christian existence is formed and shaped by these divine truths.

But we have largely become too accustomed to these truths, too used to them. We really do take them for granted, just like we used to take the saying of the Lord's Prayer for granted, assuming that everybody knows those words. We frequently pass over them, as we might do when we pray, "God is great. God is good. Let us thank him for our food. Amen."

We must reclaim the fundamental and powerful realities of these truths.

Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the

crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.” Jesus said to them, “They need not go away; you give them something to eat.” They replied, “We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.” And he said, “Bring them here to me.” Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.¹

The Bible is authoritative and this passage clearly speaks with the authority of God. But it’s not talking to us about doing miracles. It’s not talking to us about healing or feeding thousands. It’s talking to us about the nature of Jesus and the model he provides for our lives. “When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them...” His compassion for the crowds drove him to action. His compassion compelled him to heal and to feed. This Bible passage is directing us to take meaningful action because of the compassion we have for those who are in need. We are compelled to do so because Jesus is God inside time, space and human experience, including the experiences of hunger and disease.

Compassion is an aspect of self-sacrificing love. The word literally means “with suffering”. We identify with those in need out of God’s love for all humanity.

But compassion, like love, must be expressed in word and deed for it to be meaningful. We don’t just say loving words. We must do loving things. Likewise with compassion. It is not enough to speak platitudes of care. Like Jesus, we must actually take compassionate action.

¹ Matthew 14:13-21.

In our location this is as easy to do as it is to say. We just open our eyes to the needs of people around us. We allow ourselves to feel empathy, so that we might be propelled to serve others.

We could donate time, money and materials to the unhoused and addicted. We could provide material relief to immigrants and refugees, especially those from Ukraine and Iran. Perhaps the Women's Shelter or the Mental Health Services could make use of our older furnishings. We can serve others as miracles from God.

In this era of tightening restrictions and limiting of human rights, our active compassion has to take on much more of an activist role. The Bible and Jesus challenge us to defend the widow, the orphan, the immigrant and the exile. We are called to help those who cannot fill out the forms necessary to establish identity and access programs. We are called to demonstrate for those in need and to add our voices to theirs.

Remember this?

Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'²

This passage from Matthew's Gospel is authoritative for us and clearly delivers Jesus' own command to active compassion.

² Matthew 25:34-40.

The Bible is the authoritative library of God's dealings with his chosen people, the Jews.

Jesus is God inside time, space and human experience.

When we combine these two fundamental truths in our own lives, we discover God's will and model for our lives as disciples of Jesus.

We must continue to take these truths seriously and act compassionately whenever we are confronted with the needs of others. As Christians, we must allow ourselves to be compelled into action by empathy and compassion. Such is the command and example of Jesus himself.

AMEN.