

Discipleship: Ministry of Compassion

by Pastor Kurt Hoover

Pentecost Litany based on Psalm 8

Leader: When I look at your heavens,

All: the work of your fingers,

Leader: the moon and the stars,

All: which you have set in place,

Leader: what is man that you are mindful of him,

All: and the son of man that you care for him?

Leader: We worship you, Lord, In the name of the Father and The Son and The Holy Spirit.

Exodus 19:2-8 ²They set out from Rephidim and came into the wilderness of Sinai, and they encamped in the wilderness. There Israel encamped before the mountain, ³while Moses went up to God. The Lord called to him out of the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: ⁴‘You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. ⁵Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; ⁶and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.”

⁷So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the Lord had commanded him. ⁸All the people answered together and said, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do.” And Moses reported the words of the people to the Lord.

Matthew 9:35-10:8 ³⁵And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the

kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. ³⁶When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction. ²The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; ³Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

⁵These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, ⁶but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷And proclaim as you go, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ ⁸Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay.

When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

– Matthew 9:36

I walked passed the ER curtain to find a young women 2-3 years older than me in the midst of a full-blown panic attack. The nurses were scrambling, giving her one logical reason after another why they needed her to lie still for the test, for the injection... to be able to care for her. Her panic was contagious spreading to everyone in the room. Machines beeping, bright lights, rushing bodies bumping into each other.

This was not my first time in the ER. I had mandatory clinical hours in the ER as a Highschool student to obtain an EMT license. I had seen broken limbs, screams of pain, and from time to time this type of helplessness.

I stood in the corner as the medical staff clearly didn't want another body in this tight unmanageable space. Once I was addressed by the head nurse, I told her that I had been called down from the Chaplains office for a spiritual need. The nurse threw up her hands and said – 'I guess that is what this is.' And then to my surprise the nurse ushered everyone out.

I sat down next to the young women. I introduced myself as a chaplain student in Seminary taking classes to become a pastor. Through her confused thoughts she expressed her fear and her guilt for putting herself in this situation again. She acknowledged she hadn't been eating right, she hadn't been taking her prescribed medications and the ones she had been taking were certainly not helping. She was confessing. Acknowledging her mistakes and her fear. This situation was repenting her.

I listened and I offered her forgiveness. She was certain that her family and God would never forgive her, she had made to many mistakes... the same mistakes. She felt she was not worthy of their time and attention.

Certainly, God would not come near her until she had cleaned up her act. This was her perception. And yet I was sitting right in front of her. God had come near through me. I have seen this happen whenever a family member or even the lunch attendant brings God or prayer into the conversation. Something as simple as – 'I have been praying for you,' brings the Kingdom.

We talked for 5 minutes or so. Looking back, it was way more time than the medical staff were expecting. More likely, they had moved on to the next emergency. And I am not certain that I was even able in that time to convince her she was forgiven. She was relieved to hear that God was less that wrathful judge, and more the loving Father. It was Ok to be the helpless child held by God. And I do know this. In a very real way God was present there. If nothing else God was present in the calm and listening presence of the chaplain.

She agreed to let the nurses do their work. I walked out of the room and back up to the chaplain's office to wait for my next call.

The best part of the whole story is when I came back to the ER later that evening. The head nurse expressed her shock in my ability to calm the women down. 'I don't know what you did but she was a completely different person after you left.'

When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. – Matthew 9:36

This is Matthew's remembrance of what led to the official calling of the disciples. In Jesus compassion for the harassed and helpless people of this world he gave his authority to his disciples to do two things. In Seminary we learned that they were 1st and 2nd order discourse.

⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, ... proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. – Matt. 10:5-8

The first instruction was a proclamation. First order, not just in priority, but in respect to what is being communicated. The disciples are actually bringing the presence of Jesus and His Kingdom wherever they go. ‘God has been and is present for you.’ Declaration, God knows and he cares!

This was the original job of God’s treasured possession, the tribe of Isreal. Which is today the church. You will be a holy nation, a kingdom of priests. Your job will be to connect humanity with their Father in Heaven, their creator. And in that way, you will bless the world. And this is the most important thing you can do. Solving world hunger or creating peace among warring tribes would be wonderful. Healing the sick and casting out demons will happen. But the only way you achieve that is if they actually have a relationship with their Father in heaven. If they actually have faith. They actually have courage. They can set themselves aside. They know what their place is in the World. And they know how present I am in this world.

The relationship with our Maker is what makes us.

...proclaim as you go, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ (Matthew 10:7) That is first order discourse. And then comes the Second order things. The results if you will of a person seeing and having faith in God’s presence. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. (Matthew 10:8)

In my ER chaplain experience. This woman was harassed and helpless. The healers were struggling at their job until her fear was dealt with.

This is your ministry. The Ministry of Compassion. For some of us it is the heart of who we are. Serving the helpless and

harassed is exciting and life giving. Serving on the Benevolence Board is your niche. Strengthening and developing our partnership with the homeless shelters in town or the pregnancy resource Center. Places in our community deal with helplessness and harassment on a daily basis.

For others of us, it is something that shows up from time to time when it is most needed. Grandma and Grandpa know what is needed most. The right word or a hug. The listening ear that is the actual presence of God. You are that friend able to drop everything to be present in a time of loss or fear. You will have, from time to time, the word's that bring eternal life.

You are the shepherd God uses to care for His sheep. You are the worker God uses to point to and be His presence that creates Faith. You are the church. God's treasured possession. You make God real. You bring the Kingdom!

Let me wrap up by pointing out just how vivid Matthew's explanation of God's presence and compassion is for the world. Matthew clearly wants you to see what He saw in God through Jesus.

No one wants to be helpless. But this is our human reality. It isn't a matter of if, but when. When you are helpless God will step in to care for you. His compassion is real. And it maybe, today you are in need of that... compassion.

Matthew knew and saw the compassion of God for you - His creation.

When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. – Matthew 9:36

These are vivid words! Who in your life is just plain lost. They can't find their place in this world, direction or purpose. Is this you? Sheep without a shepherd. Lost, distracted, wondering after things that will only hurt them.

Harassed – the Greek word here is a description of being deeply annoyed and frustrated with others, the world or life in general... the feeling of being skinned alive. God looks out upon the crowded masses and see's their agony. God knows!

Helpless – the Greek word describes a person or thing that has been hurled away, thrown down, discarded. God looks out upon his creation and see voices that seek to divides us and consume us. God knows!

Jesus Christ's sees our dilemma. Jesus Christ knows your pain. And He has a deep gut-wrenching, stomach-turning compassion! for you.

God has compassion for His creation and has sent out a people to reunite us with His presence. Through you... *'The kingdom of heaven is at hand!'*



*James
Tissot