

12 May 2, 2021

but it's not the only way. You may want to talk with a friend or perhaps a counselor to get a better perspective on your problems. Finally, what about your relationships? Are some of them strained or broken? The New Testament talks a lot about forgiveness. Invite the Holy Spirit to guide you in taking steps toward reconciliation.

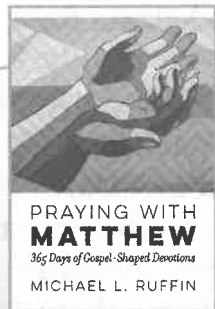
Resources

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May 9, 2021

Compassionate Healing



Luke 8:40-56



Central Question

How can I show compassion to those who are hurting?

Scripture

Luke 8:40-56

40 Now when Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him. 41 Just then there came a man named Jairus, a leader of the synagogue. He fell at Jesus' feet and begged him to come to his house, 42 for he had an only daughter, about twelve years old, who was dying. As he went, the crowds pressed in on him. 43 Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years; and though she had spent all she had on physicians, no one could cure her. 44 She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his clothes, and immediately her hemorrhage stopped. 45 Then Jesus asked, "Who touched me?" When all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds surround you and press in on you." 46 But Jesus said, "Someone touched me; for I noticed that power had gone out from me." 47 When the woman saw that she could not remain hidden, she came trembling; and falling down before him, she declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. 48 He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace." 49 While he was still speaking, someone came from the leader's house

to say, "Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the teacher any longer." 50 When Jesus heard this, he replied, "Do not fear. Only believe, and she will be saved." 51 When he came to the house, he did not allow anyone to enter with him, except Peter, John, and James, and the child's father and mother. 52 They were all weeping and wailing for her; but he said, "Do not weep; for she is not dead but sleeping." 53 And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. 54 But he took her by the hand and called out, "Child, get up!" 55 Her spirit returned, and she got up at once. Then he directed them to give her something to eat. 56 Her parents were astounded; but he ordered them to tell no one what had happened.

Reflecting

Have you ever wondered about the origin of hospitals? They are ubiquitous in American cities and found in practically every large town. Why do we have them? The question seems strange until you learn that before the fourth century AD, there were no hospitals at all for the general population in Europe or the Middle East.

The first hospitals for the general population were the result of Christian compassion and mercy for the sick and dying. One of the first such hospitals was founded in Constantinople. The other was founded by Basil of Caesarea in the city of that name in Cappadocia. The goal was to have a hospital in every cathedral city.

Christian hospitals spread throughout the Roman and Persian Empires. By the Middle Ages, they were scattered across Europe. Most were associated with monastic orders.

Hospitals ministered to various groups, including orphans, the sick, the aged, and the poor. One beautiful example was the Hospital of Pammatone in Genoa, Italy, where Catherine of Genoa served as director in the late 1400s. It was a 130-bed hospital with an attached orphanage for 100 girls.

In 1493, plague struck the city. Those who could flee did so. Of those who remained, four-fifths died. Catherine could have left, but she did not. In fact, she converted the space behind the hospital into a large open-air infirmary. Every day, Catherine could be found walking among the plague victims, offering what solace and comfort she could. Like Jesus touching "unclean" people, Catherine showed mercy to those whom others would shun.



Remove the healings from Jesus' life, and you have only a half-life. (Basden)

The inspiration for Christian compassion can be traced back to Jesus. Today, we will read two accounts of his compassion.

Studying

Today's text gives us a story within a story. The first story begins in verses 40-42, where Jesus returns to Galilee after a brief sojourn east of the Sea of Galilee. The people were excited to have him return. He had been in many of their villages and towns, proclaiming the good news and demonstrating the coming kingdom of God by healing all who were sick and disabled.

In verse 41, a synagogue leader named Jairus comes to Jesus with a tearful request. His twelve-year-old daughter is dying, and he pleads with Jesus to come and heal her. Jesus immediately accompanies the man to his house, followed by his disciples and a crowd of onlookers. The people are obviously hoping to see another miracle performed by this renowned healer.

Their hurry to the house is interrupted, however, by a woman with a serious condition (v. 42). The woman, who is never named, has suffered for twelve years with a bleeding problem. She has spent all her money on various doctors to no avail. According to the Mosaic law, she is considered

unclean. Nevertheless, she carefully makes her way through the crowd, hoping to get close to Jesus and touch the fringe of his robe. She does, and she is healed.

Jesus immediately stops and asks who touched him. He felt the healing power go out from him (v. 46). This detail reminds us that Jesus' healing ministry is not without strain. He is depleted in some sense when he heals, though we never hear him complain.

Frightened, the woman comes trembling to Jesus and confesses what she has done (v. 47). Why would Jesus want to make this episode public? More often, Jesus requests silence from those he heals. One reason he might have treated this woman differently was to assure her that she had indeed been healed. He wanted to dismiss any lingering doubts or fears.

Another possible reason reflects the cultural circumstances. Some in the crowd probably recognized this woman and would have known that, by moving through the crowd, she had rendered them ritually unclean by her touch. Perhaps Jesus wanted the people to know that God blessed her shocking behavior by healing her.

Even as Jesus speaks to the healed woman, news arrives from Jairus's house. His daughter has died; the healer is no longer needed. But Jesus is more than merely a healer. He tells Jairus to believe, and his daughter will be saved.

The words translated "made...well" in verse 48 and "saved" in verse 50 come from the same Greek verb. Both translations are valid. Sometimes the Greek verb means healing or making whole in a physical sense. In other contexts, it can mean salvation in a religious or spiritual sense. In some cases, both meanings may be applied.



If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, not at the time of her impurity, or if she has a discharge beyond the time of her impurity, all the days of the discharge she shall continue in uncleanness. (Lev 15:25)

Jairus demonstrates his faith by leading Jesus on to his house. When they arrive, they find a group of mourners weeping and wailing (v. 52). Jesus tells them to stop mourning: the girl is not dead but only sleeping. Rather than complying, the mourners ridicule him. It is likely that these were professional mourners. In Jesus' day, a family that could afford such mourners would hire them upon the death of a loved one. That means these people have been around death. They know what it looks like.

Why does Jesus say the girl is only sleeping when he knows she is dead? Most likely, Jesus is not describing her physical condition but rather is predicting her return to life. Her condition is only temporary; Jesus is about to take her hand and "awaken" her. The language of death as "sleeping" is also used in the story of Lazarus (John 11:11-15).

Jesus doesn't allow the crowd who followed him to enter the house. Only the girl's parents and three of his closest disciples—Peter, John, and James—go in with him (v. 51). If the mourners are inside the house, he evidently ushers them out as well. The crowd wants to see a miracle, but Jesus isn't interested in providing a spectacle. All he cares about is showing compassion for the young girl and her parents.

When Jesus takes the girl's hand, contact with the corpse renders him ritually unclean. Therefore, the issue of ritual uncleanness arises in both of these stories. The compassion of Jesus will not be limited by issues of law or tradition. Compassion is a central characteristic of who he is.

He tells the girl to wake up, and her life is instantly restored. The reference to her spirit returning was a common way of thinking in Jesus' culture. He tells her parents to give her something to eat. This demonstrates that she is really alive and not merely a ghost (see 24:39, 42).



What factors keep compassion from being your highest priority?

Understanding

How can we show compassion to hurting people? Luke presents Jesus as a compassionate, empathetic healer. He shows compassion to the multitudes and also to individuals. He has compassion on a man who fears losing his only daughter. A young girl lies dead, her parents grieving. Jesus touches her and restores her to life. The parents are dumbfounded and overjoyed. He has compassion on a woman whom society has shunned.

Jesus provides us with powerful examples of how to show compassion.

What might keep us from showing compassion? It could be simple inattention. It's easy to ignore the suffering around us. We can be so focused on our own lives that we fail to notice when others are suffering.

Prejudice could be the culprit. Can another person's race, religion, ethnic background, or sexual orientation hinder us from showing compassion? Could factors like these cause us to ignore those who are suffering around us?

Religious beliefs and practices can limit our compassion. This would have limited the crowd's involvement with the bleeding woman and the dead girl. What aspects of our culture might condition us to be unsympathetic? Do we ever think that some people are getting what they deserve when they suffer?

Though none of us are healers as adept as Jesus, we are not lacking resources to show compassion. We can give money. We can pray. We can take a more hands-on approach that seeks to alleviate some of the suffering, like volunteering at soup kitchens, in homeless shelters, in hospitals, or with other organizations that seek to minister to others.



When physical healing does not happen, those who are affected may need their hearts slowly healed. Show them the love of God in Christ Jesus. Be compassionate.

What About Me?

• *Some people seem more naturally compassionate than others.* I have spent years praying to be more compassionate because I have realized that, for whatever reason, my level was nowhere near that of Jesus. Today, I am more compassionate than I was forty years ago. Do you need to pray for a larger heart of compassion?

• *People are suffering in your city or town.* Go for a walk or a drive and look for evidence of suffering. You might notice a hospital or a homeless person or something else that is totally unexpected. If we go looking for signs of suffering, it is likely that we will find them.

• *Compassion can increase in a group.* How might your Sunday school class or another group come together to help people who are suffering? Brainstorm ideas or opportunities and then make an action plan. Put that plan in action for compassion's sake.

• *Compassion is hindered when we are ignorant of another's pain and suffering.* What personal pains have you not shared with people who care? Decide today to share how you are suffering with the people who love you, so that they might share Christlike compassion with you.

Resources

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