

# Jesus' compassion expressed in gospel mission

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[0:00] The heading is Jesus' compassion is expressed in gospel mission. Now, people do have dreams of Jesus and visions and impressions and feelings.

There's a sort of standard type account of, say, somebody in Islam who doesn't have access to a Bible, who has a dream of Jesus calling to this person, and then their take along the route of finding a Bible.

So, via dreams, visions, impressions, feelings, but via words. I think this is important. Via words. And which words? Well, there's obviously the words of Jesus himself. I think this passage points up the words he gave to his apostles. So, we'll come think about that a little bit.

In other words, through the book. Encountering Jesus through the book. This book. And then, to ask a question, how important are the apostolic writings?

[1:36] So, apostolic meaning the things to do with the apostles, the twelve here. How important are the apostolic words? In other words, can we truly say, I follow Jesus, but I have a problem with the rest of the New Testament?

Is that a possible thing to say? Is it possible to say, I follow Jesus, but I have a problem with, say, Paul? The writings of Paul. Because I don't think it is possible to say that.

But anyway, we'll see this as we go through. So, there's a couple of introductory thoughts there. I'm simply going to take the verses to pieces and then make some comments on them afterwards. And I'll take it to pieces in a visual way, which you might think is rather unnecessary, because you've probably got it already. But anyway, bear with me. The context of this is chapter 9 of 35, which we read.

We're at a hinge point in the advancement of the kingdom. So, in case you didn't know what a hinge looks like, there's a hinge. And we move from, as you will remember, a catalogue of Messiah's single-handed works into, there's single-handed, into instructions now for Messiah's multiple workers.

[2:56] So, there's a big harvest field. And we start off with one worker, which is few. And now, many workers are going to be sent out. Well, even that's in stages, because the workers go out.

And to begin with, there are 12. Now, these 12 are key people, as has been said several times. And the motive for this is compassion.

So, I think when I was talking about this, I said the Hins is made of compassion. He has compassion on people. That's why he sends out the 12. That's why, at the end of Matthew's Gospel, he says, all authority is given to me, therefore go and make disciples of all nations. The motive behind it is compassion. And the 12, as has been pointed out, and Chris pointed this out last week, are remarkable extensions of Jesus' own ministry.

There is a great intertwining, almost, of our Lord and Saviour, our unique Lord and Saviour, and these 12 whom he commissions and sends out.

[4:10] So, as was pointed out last week, the miracles they do seem very much on a par with the miracles of Jesus himself. So, they heal the sick, verse 8.

They raise the dead. They cleanse those with leprosy. They drive out demons. These are the things that Jesus was doing. And the apostles are so linked with Jesus that they are almost like an extension of him personally.

There are stages that we go through. So, in due course, this mission, this gospel mission, will go to all nations.

At this point, it is verse 6, just the lost sheep of Israel, a particular focus. Don't go to the Gentiles. Don't go to the Samaritans. But at this stage, the lost, sorry, the lost sheep of Israel. So, the 12 go there. And, what am I trying to say here?

[5:23] The stages will go on to the nations. And it won't just be the 12. It will be a lot more than 12. I think I missed something. So, let's look at the instructions that Jesus gives.

And our verses are 10, 11 to 15. So, these are instructions. He has been saying to them, preach this message, verse 7. The kingdom of heaven is near.

I think it would be worth, actually, a little careful discussion as to whether our message is exactly the same as that.

Because they were saying, really, the kingdom draws near when Jesus was physically present. And that's what they could say.

Here is the Messiah. So, the kingdom is sort of within inches of you. The good news that we preach, it was actually defined for us this morning, wasn't it?

[6:33] It was that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. That he was buried. That he rose again according to the scriptures. That he was seen by all those lists of people.

So, it's part of the same thing. But the focus seems to me just to be slightly different. That we're not saying Christ is here. If you go down the road, you can find him.

We're saying he has come. He died for our sins. He was raised from the dead. And he is coming again. And that's where we are in the good news.

The good news is that's where we are in the kingdom. And that makes it accessible to you by faith in what Christ has done. And in expectation of what he will yet do.

The disciples, the apostles demonstrate the signs of the imminent kingdom. With Jesus himself being there. But the bit that we're looking at this evening is some instructions about traveling and accommodation for that stage.

[7:36] And I think just to be over careful. It's not saying if you're a missionary today, you do exactly the same thing as this.

It's saying the principles are the same. But bear in mind, we're on a different stage of this. So, what does it say? It says, verse 11.

Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person and stay at his house until you leave. So, there's the house.

I think two things are said. They're more or less similar, but in two different ways. So, let's imagine that they go to this village, which is Jacobsville-on-Sea.

It's a sleepy seaside town somewhere in Israel. And they arrive at Jacobsville-on-Sea. And first of all, it's about peace.

[8:30] Am I getting this right? Well, I'm going to talk about peace first of all. As you enter the home, give it your greeting.

If the home is deserving, if the home is worthy, let your peace rest on it. If it is not, let your peace return to you.

Okay. So, let's think about peace first of all. So, to look for a worthy house. Now, I wonder what that means. Whether they go to the village and say, who in this village is the most true Israelite here? Who's the most respected member of your religious community? That must be the sort of thing that they would inquire.

And the question is whether that person really is worthy. Now, what does this worthy mean? So, some worthy person and stay at his house.

[9:40] In the original, you have to understand that the house, it's not talking about a worthy house. It's the people in it that really count. And what does this worthiness mean?

It's going to turn out to be worthy of the kingdom. And Jesus isn't saying that people earn the kingdom, but he's saying that there are some attitudes, some understandings that are fit for the kingdom, and others that are not.

So, I think worthy of the kingdom is the sort of thing that's being said. So, you get 10, verse 10, says the worker is worthy of his keep.

So, that's a use of worthy. And in verse 37 and 38, you get worthy as well. Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.

He who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. He's saying, what attitudes, what value systems are worthy of Messiah?

[10:55] What fit with the claims of Messiah and what don't? So, it's rather radical, isn't it? He's saying that if you value your family above me, then that's not worthy of me.

That's what it says, isn't it? Anybody who loves your son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. So, this worthiness is not earning anything. It's saying, what fits with the kingdom that Jesus himself comes to bring.

And he says, so you enter the home and you greet it. You enter the house, you greet it. Verse 12. Give it your greeting. So, let's, here comes, they're working in pairs today and they come and they greet the house.

And as we see, this brings peace. If the home is worthy, let your peace rest on it. So, this greeting brings peace to the home.

Now, I don't want to just rush over that. I think that's quite a significant thing. When the representatives, these apostolic representatives of Jesus come into this home and they greet it, God bless these people.

[12:08] God bless this home. They are bringing peace to the home. Peace is offered. Peace is extended. How blessed, blessed on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news.

Proclaiming peace. Announcing news of happiness. Now, I'm quoting a song now, aren't I? But, I think there is something quite momentous about the entry of these representatives of Jesus into this house.

When they come, they bring a greeting. They bring peace. And not just, you know, peace as in, let me make you a cup of coffee and I'll give you a biscuit.

Sort of, well, that's a nice sort of gentle thing to do. They're actually bringing something eternal. They're bringing something quite crucial about the kingdom. You greet these people and you bring peace.

You're bringing, you might also say, the opportunity of eternal peace to these people. Now, the reaction is important here. So, I put peace in a little cloudy bubble thing, which I'm not sure is a very good way of doing it.

[13:24] And here's the reaction. So, this reaction is yes. We will, we want that. Yeah. We want to know about this. Yes, we welcome this into our home.

Sorry? A bird. What, yeah, I didn't think of that. I was trying to think, how can I do peace as a picture? Yes, a bird would have been much better, wouldn't it? Yeah. Yeah.

I'll put it right for the, what goes up on the internet. And, so they come, they bring peace, and it's received. If, if, if the home is deserving, verse 13, if the home is worthy, let your peace rest on it. So, there's, I'll change that to a bird, but there's the peace resting on that house, on that home, on those people. It's rather a beautiful picture, isn't it? It's rather, but it's a very, what am I trying to say, crucial thing.

How do they respond, when these, apostolic representatives of Jesus come? Bringing peace, bringing words of peace, and they welcome them, and they say, let that peace rest on those people.

[14:41] Now, he, he also spells out the opposite. Now, peace not received. If anyone, at the end of verse 13, if, if, if the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it, if it is not.

So, let's just, in a rather tedious way, go through, what happens if they don't receive it. So, not having you here. Off you go.

Whoop. Yeah, that's supposed to be, peace being kicked out. That didn't work, did it? If, if there is that reception, so I know just the not smiley face, the peace doesn't rest on that house.

But, interestingly, Jesus says, it returns to you. I'd like to come and think of that in a moment. But, this, this house, which was thought to be worthy, you know, this is the best house in the village, the most likely house in the village, to receive you guys.

But, if that, if they don't receive you, this house is not worthy of the kingdom. Peace does not rest on it. And, and that's a thing. There's definitely something there.

[15:56] It is, a crisis. It is a life deciding encounter. And, in those few moments, when the apostles knocked on the door, and said, we represent Messiah.

We'd like to tell you the good news of the kingdom. We've been raising the dead, and healing the sick, and cleansing lepers. Can we come in? And, the person at the door says, well, actually, you know, we're a bit busy.

Try next door. You know, in that split second, a huge decision has been taken, hasn't it? Something has been rejected. something has been put off, or, a no has been said.

And, that is not worthy of the kingdom. Yeah? So, let's say, let's say the same thing again, in the other way that Jesus puts it, in verse 14.

if anyone will not welcome you, or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet, when you leave that home or town. So, two things, they won't welcome you, does it say welcome or receive?

[17:13] Yeah, welcome you, or listen to your words. So, notice the connection, between the person, and the word here.

Jesus says, if anybody is ashamed of me, how does that finish? No, there's another bit in between. If anybody is ashamed of me, and my words, I will be ashamed of him. That's very important, that. So, you can't say, oh, I'm not ashamed of Jesus, I'm ashamed of his words though.

No, Jesus says, no, the two go together. If anyone is ashamed of me, and my words, I will be ashamed of him. So, the Christ, is the Christ who speaks, and he is inseparable from his message, and so too the apostles here, his representatives.

It's them and their words. They're inseparable. If you, they don't welcome you, and don't hear your words. Listen to your words.

[18:18] So, shake the dust off your feet, so in case you didn't get that, there's the person coming along with the apostle, apostolic words, which actually words that were given to them by Christ, so they come with Christ words, and there's the rejection, and there's the kicking out, and they're sent on their way, and what they do is they shake the dust off their feet.

That's supposed to be a foot with dust being shaken off. Shaking dust off the feet would be something that an Orthodox Jew would do if he or she had had to go into Gentile territory.

You know, if you had to go down, if you'd left Jacobsville-on-Sea, and had to go to Brighton and Hove, and where you would shake the dust off your feet when you got back to Jacobsville-on-Sea, because that's what you do when you've been in a Gentile place, a place outside the kingdom of God, outside the blessing of God, outside the people of God.

that's a fearful thing to do, isn't it? They've gone to Jacobsville-on-Sea, you know, Orthodox, just quietly getting on with our lives.

We have the law, we do our observances, we eat our meat, kosher and everything, but we're not having the Apostles. We're not having Messiah, Jesus, and his words, and his representatives, no thank you.

[19:48] And Jesus says, okay, you shake the dust off your feet, because in that moment of decision, they've said, we don't want to be the people of God.

That's a fearful thing, isn't it? Words not received, if they don't welcome you, or hear your words, end of verse 15, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.

What a fearful thing to say. But this is Jacobsville-on-Sea. We're fine, upstanding people. We vote the right way. We have a very nice green in the center of the village.

We're the tidiest village around here. We do everything right. But, Jesus says, if you won't have my words, you make yourself like a Gentile place.

In fact, Sodom and Gomorrah will have an easier time on the day of judgment than you. Which is shocking, isn't it?

[21:08] You know what went on in Sodom and Gomorrah, don't you? You know the evil of that place. I'm going to come to that in a moment. But, he says, what you've just done is worse than what they did all through their history.

That is a shocking thing, isn't it? And what it comes down to is that moment, would you hear the apostolic word? Would you receive the apostolic representation or not?

And you said no. So, here are my comments. I think I've got four of them. So, number one, there was a historic last chance decision time given to Israel.

And we've commented on this before because as the gospel goes through, Jesus himself comes to Jerusalem and says, oh, and weeps over Jerusalem.

If only you'd known the time of your visitation. You know, this was the last chance. And this is part of that last chance scenario. And the sad, sad thing that this was almost totally rejected.

[22:19] So, I draw from this. there is such a thing as the last chance. Not just historically for these people but existentially for people nowadays.

I think we often agonize over relatives that are, let's say, they're very, very ill in their last moments on this earth and we think, how can I speak the gospel to them?

And I always think, in a way, it's too late. The window of opportunity closed a few days ago, as it were. There are windows of opportunity.

opportunity. Last chance has come. By the time you're so ill that you can't hear anybody, the chance has already gone past you.

While you have health, while we have health, while we have mental ability, that's the opportunity. For these people, it was their last chance which, it would appear, many of them rejected.

[23:33] So, it's a thing, isn't it? Just, say, for us, if we've heard the gospel, let's take advantage of it before we get to the point where the chance is over and gone.

the Bible says that the people are not to become Christians just on a whim and on the spur of the moment. It talks about counting the cost and that takes time.

But, having counted the cost, if you can see the issues clearly, then the message of the Bible is don't delay any further. Don't leave the apostolic word standing on the doorstep while you go and do the vacuuming or something like that.

Now's the time to welcome in that word into the house, into the home. And, as Chris so helpfully pointed out last time, we're to understand that Jewish people are very much still welcome in the kingdom.

And, the Apostle Paul sort of spells out the dynamics of this, that there's a particular dynamic of making those people of Jewish heritage jealous by saying, look at Christians have got all your Bible and they relish it and understand it and glory in it and wouldn't you like to have some of that, that idea of making them jealous by the grace shown to the Gentiles.

[25:03] So that was number one, there's a historic last chance decision time given to Israel and there are last chances given across the world, maybe even to us this evening.

Second thing, the rejection of privilege is, is this a sentence tremblingly blameworthy? I mean to say that what's described here, it's just a few verses, but it would almost make you tremble, wouldn't it? To think how huge that decision was made on that doorstep in those few moments moments when the apostles knocked on the door.

How momentous the decision was. Shake the dust off your feet, says Jesus. Treat them as Gentiles, says Jesus.

It will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment, says Jesus. That place of wickedness and the most notable sin recorded for us being homosexual rape.

[26:07] And Jesus is saying he is saying this, isn't he? That for you, Jacob's will on sea, with all that you've known, all that you have, and then this final thing of the apostolic greeting of peace coming to you, for you to reject that is a worse thing than all that went on in Sodom and

Gomorraah.

You could hardly believe it, could you? But he said that's how that's how! abominable it is for you with all your privileges have known so much to reject the Messiah.

Jacob's bill on sea will face greater judgment because of the privileges they had but rejected. You know, Paul, I think, you mentioned this about Paul saying, oh, that I could be condemned, that my brothers could be saved.

The way he says, but theirs, you see, the privileges they have, theirs is the giving of the law, theirs is the temple worship, theirs is the adoption of sons, oh, that they could see what it is to have all that fulfilled in Jesus the Messiah.

I think I'd like to spread that out a little bit further, so let me make up another imaginary city, so this is Rochester in the woods, and it has a cathedral, and this city has had 900 years of Christian witness, and they've had a cathedral there for 900 years, and for 900 years, people have been coming together and saying, Almighty and most merciful Father, we have heard and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep, we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts, we have offended against thy holy laws, and they've repeated all these liturgical words, and yet they've got to the point where they take no notice of this whatsoever, and the cathedral city of Rochester in the woods is hard and insensitive to the things of God, God, and I'd say there's something similar there, isn't there?

[28:29] Privilege, rejected. I think anecdotally of one of the dear brothers in the Sussex Gospel Partnership who went to a parish somewhere in the Chichester area, an Anglican parish, where they would recite the creed and the Lord's Prayer and have the Gospel read each Sunday and something from the Old Testament read each Sunday and all of those things, and when he came and preached the Gospel, they spurned him and they hated him and they gossiped about him until he had to leave.

They made life unbearable for him. Surely that is a cringingly, tremblingly, blameworthy thing to do. Or think of our society, Western Europe which has had hundreds and hundreds of years of Christian influence and now we are turning that into secularism and thinking it is an improvement. It is a tremblingly blameworthy thing. Or children brought up in a Christian family.

I do tremble, don't you? Our children who have been brought up, we have read the Bible to them, prayed with them, prayed for them, come here and they have met Christian people, admired Christian people, and don't believe.

Let's pray for them. I think, you know, we are going to pray for Christian children in a couple of weeks time and I think that is a really important prayer to be praying. Third thing, the last chance comes in the form of the apostles and the apostolic words.

[30:29] In other words, you can't separate Christ from his words. whoever is ashamed of me and my words, I will be ashamed of him, so you can't separate Christ and his words, you can't separate Christ from the apostles, because the apostles are his commissioned representatives.

I want an example of that. On eBay, if you buy a battery for your phone, let's suppose, I don't know what, do iPhones have batteries?

Do they? Okay, so let's imagine an iPhone battery, and you think, I need an iPhone battery, and you look on eBay, and you say, how much are they, 50 quid or something like that, from the authorized supplier, and then you look down the list, and you say, well, I could get them for £4.50 from China, and it will say iPhone on the outside, but it won't be made by Apple, it will be made, forgive me, but I think this is true, it will be made in China, and somebody will just have stamped made by Apple on it in a rather imperfect way, it wasn't the real thing, it didn't come from the real supplier, if you want the gospel, you have to go to the real thing, you have to go to the real supplier, and the real supplier is the apostles, they're the commissioned outlet for Messiah stamped truth, you can't go, if you go to an eBay version, just really beware, you can't separate the apostles from Christ, and you can't separate the apostles from their words, what have I put there, is it not therefore completely impossible then to claim to have Christ while simultaneously rejecting the words of the apostles, so I think it is,

I know that sin makes people terribly inconsistent, because it affects our minds and we become inconsistent in greater or lesser ways, so I'm sure there are believing people, saved people who got completely messed up about this, but let's not think about the exceptions to the rule, let's think

about the rule, and the rule is if we want to have Christ we have to have the apostles, and if we want to have the apostles we have to have their words, so when people say Paul got it wrong about sexual ethics, and they're rejecting the apostle Paul, that is a very dangerous thing to do, because to reject the apostolic word is to reject the one who sent them, and when you get down to that you're in a very, very big rejection indeed, or to say Paul got it wrong about the wrath bearing nature of the atonement, that's a very, very dangerous road to tread, the last chance comes in the form of the apostles and the apostolic words, oh dear, let's see, my fourth thing, and this is the final one, is this, the overtures of the kingdom are not wasted, now when I say overtures,

I obviously haven't thought long enough about the word, because that's a pretty obscure word, I'm meaning to say the approaches of the kingdom, so when the kingdom approaches and brings invitations and greetings and communication, that's what I mean by the overtures, those are not wasted, that's what I'm getting from these texts, so although it says about the peace, you see, the peace can be rejected, as you enter the home, give it your greeting, if the home is worthy, let your peace rest on it, but, if not, so peace can be rejected, but if it is rejected, it says let your peace return to you, I'm just going to be a little bit speculative and they're commenting on this, the peace does not disappear, it's a thought, isn't it, Jesus is not saying nothing here, so you come as a peace bringer with this wonderful gift of peace, it's rejected and the peace doesn't just go and disappeared or squawk and disappear, if it was a bird, it just doesn't go, it does something and

[34:52] Jesus says it returns to the sender and I'd like to just, perhaps I'm being a little bit speculative on this, the overtures of the gospel are not wasted, peace was brought, it was rejected in one place, but the peace didn't disappear, it's still able to do something and so I would like to just spin it out in this way, if you went to Jacobsville on sea and they rejected you, you'd say, right, okay, well in that case we'll have to go to Abraham Metropolis, Abraham, anyway, we'll go to this next village and we'll knock on their doors, so the blessing that didn't come to Jacobsville on sea actually comes to Abraham Apocalypse here, the blessing wasn't lost, it wasn't wasted, it went somewhere else and this is the big picture, isn't it, that when en masse

Israel rejected Messiah, this explosive blessing to all the nations, so rejection here led to a blessing somewhere else, rejoicing in the villages of Israel, rejoicing in the cities of the nations, which is right, isn't it, so rejection in Jerusalem led to rejoicing in Rome or in Turin or in Huddersfield or Halifax or you know, think of a city, God, the overtures of the gospel are not wasted, and I think there's an encouragement there, so my conclusion is, let's appreciate and stand on the gospel, it is wonderful good news, isn't it, that somebody should, as it were, knock on our door and say, I'm going to bring you peace, and you open the door and they bring peace, let's appreciate that, let's not forget that, and let us in our turn, so we're not one of the twelve, but we're generations down the track, we're sort of this perpetual second generation, we have, we too can be part of this, and in a subsidiary sense, we're always knocking on the doors of people's lives, in every conversation that we have, with the opportunity to come in and bring that same peace, wonderful thing to be engaged in, wouldn't it?

And let's be optimistic that even though, actually the passage is going to say quite a bit about rejection, there is some sense, and I might not have got the right handle on it this evening, but there is some sense in which even that rejection doesn't waste the grace of God, God will do something with that.

Thank you. So let's stop for a minute, we're going to sing in just a second, does anybody want to come back on anything or ask a question or make an observation?

[38:16] Thank you. Thank you.