

# Lesson Learned

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Preacher: Ray Sweet

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, hey, good morning. My name is Ray Sweep from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. As always, if you'd like to learn a little more about FCC, you can check us out at FCCGreensburg.com or you can go to the FCC Greensburg Facebook page.

But hey, thank you so much for tuning in to the preaching of God's Word today. Our heart is always to get into that Word, but most of all, let it get into us and truly change these hearts.

Now, when someone says, lesson learned, that usually means I did something I thought was okay in the moment, but quickly realized it wasn't really that wise.

Lesson learned. I'll never do that again because the pain, the shame, the embarrassment, the consequences, they weren't fun. Last week, I asked you guys what lesson learned moments you faced, and here's a few responses I got.

A mom in our church remembers learning to drive a stick shift when she was probably about 12 years old, and she evidently didn't give it enough gas, so she killed it, which is easy to do for beginners.

[ 1 : 11 ] But not realizing she needed to push the brakes in to stop moving, she rolled right into the side of her barn. Lesson learned. A graduate student in our church said that she is a natural people pleaser, and she loves to say yes to way too many things at once.

And because of this, she had completely forgotten about a commitment that she had made, and she really disappointed a friend. That's when someone gave her some wise advice.

They said, sometimes the godliest thing you can say is no. Lesson learned. Lesson learned.

Another lady at our church told me the story about being on the very first girls' high school basketball team at Greensburg, and after halftime, she got a rebound, and she put the ball back up for two points.

And she was so excited until she realized it was the wrong goal. Two points for the other team. Oh yeah, we switch ends at halftime.

Lesson learned. And then last, one husband in our church told his wife that her messy bun was just a little too messy. Now he's with Jesus.

[ 2 : 23 ] No, I'm just kidding. But for sure, lesson learned. But I have a feeling each of us could tell a story of when we could say, lesson learned.

And you know what? When I studied our passage today from the book of Matthew, I could see some crucial lessons to be learned for us. So go ahead, turn in your Bibles about three quarters-ish the way through.

First New Testament book, the book of Matthew. Matthew chapter 15. And we're going to peer today into the feeding of 4,000 men and their families that encountered an awesome God of compassion.

And as you turn in there to Matthew 15, welcome back here to the fourth week of our series called Just Jesus. Daily, we walk in a world that is full of partial truths and extreme bias.

A culture where we're told that we get to decide our own truth. In other words, you do you, boo-boo, and I'll do me, and we'll all just be happy. And yet, how we think determines our actions.

[ 3 : 30 ] And actions always affect more than just me. They affect the culture around us that screams at us that we have to believe and we have to champion these things, or else we're this, insert colorful name there, right?

So this is why it's so important that we go into our prayer closet, that we open up the word, that we let the words of our Savior wash over us with truth.

And while all Scripture is breathed from God, in this series, we're simply narrowing in on the words in red from Jesus to discover the truth of the kingdom of God.

Now, let's look at Matthew chapter 15. So if you're not there already, flip really fast, about three-quarters of the way through your Bible, to the first New Testament book, Matthew chapter 15. And let's start here in verse 29. It says, Jesus called his disciples to him and said, His disciples answered, Where could we get enough bread in this remote place to feed such a crowd? [ 5 : 18 ] How many loaves do you have? Jesus asked. Seven, they replied, and a few small fish. He told the crowd to sit down on the ground, and then he took the seven loaves and the fish, and when he had given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples, and they in turn to the rest of the people.

They all ate and were satisfied. Afterward, the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. The number of those who ate was 4,000 men, besides, or not counting, women and children.

So listen, as humans, we have the tendency to take two or three biblical attributes of God's character that we really like, while often kind of ignoring the others, which leads to all kinds of false doctrines about God.

And while our God is full of justice, righteousness, wrath, holiness, being the perfect judge who can do no wrong, you know, at the same time, he's also a God of grace and forgiveness, patience, mercy, and as we see here, compassion.

That means he suffers with others, feeling their pain and sorrow as he meets us in the midst of it. Why? Why would he do that?

[ 6 : 40 ] Because you are made in his image, and he cares about you more than you'll ever know on this earth. Enough to give his innocent life on the cross as a substitute for our guilty ones.

Now, as we pick up in this story, Jesus had just left the cities of Tyre and Sidon, coming kind of around and down the east side of the Sea of Galilee, until he got to the southeast region known as Decapolis.

And while Jesus' ministry was still primarily to the Jews, once again, we see him break free of the prejudices that so many first century Jews held to, and to show that the kingdom of God extends throughout the world.

As Jesus sat in a remote region on the mountainside, the scripture says that great crowds came to him, and they brought the blind, the mute, the crippled, basically anyone with illness, deformities of the body, maybe even missing limbs.

And the verb used here shows that they could not reach Jesus quick enough to help their loved ones. We know that people would have heard about Jesus' presence in that region, and would have made the decent trek to this remote area, arriving maybe at different times and different days, until there were somewhere around 4,000 men.

[ 8 : 08 ] That means probably between 12 and up to 20,000 people, including women and children. And the first lesson learned, and by the way, if you are a note taker, here at First Christian Church, we have a way that you can look at that digitally, and you will just need to download the YOU, the YouVersion Bible app, go to the menu, go to events, go to First Christian Church of Greensburg, and then you will see the outline.

But here's the first lesson learned today. Praise Jesus for his limitless compassion. Praise him for his limitless compassion.

Church, I stand in awe when I read the Gospels and see the compassion Jesus shows constantly and consistently. And for anyone who's worked in an area where you distribute help to others in some way, you know it's easy to get hardened by a lack of gratefulness, by poor behaviors, by entitlement mentality, that brings some people just back time and time again.

And think about this. No matter where Jesus went, the people with physical struggles followed. And you can't blame them. And now let's narrow in a little bit here on Matthew chapter 15, starting in verse 30.

It says, Great crowds came to him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others. And they laid them at his feet, and he healed them.

[ 9 : 46 ] The people were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled made well, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. And they praised. This is a Gentile crowd here, not the Jewish crowd for the most part.

They praised the God of Israel. So picture this. People surrounding Jesus, they're begging him to heal their loved ones, many of which have extreme physical ailments.

And while one formerly mute woman might be singing praises to God, and a blind boy sees the beauty of creation for the first time, you have others still in line, groaning in agony, wondering if Jesus will come near.

While one woman's legs miraculously turned from jello to a Gentile jig, whatever that is, another lay lifeless on their mat waiting.

See, this mixture of pure rejoicing combined with suffering so moved Jesus' heart that he met them in their pain with a heart full of compassion.

[ 10 : 50 ] And while he had a purpose for their physical healing, I want you to know that Jesus wants to meet us in our struggles with the same compassion.

Maybe it's an obvious physical ailment that you battle, or maybe not so visible as you suffer in silence with anxiety or loneliness, abandonment, struggling marriage, a prodigal child, family drama, a tough decision you have to make, and the list goes on.

And while his healing may not always look like the easy road we desire, his compassion surrounds us with his presence and meets us in our pain.

And I love, I absolutely love how the well-known preacher D.L. Moody put this. He said, the Son of God passed by the mansions in heaven and went down into a manger.

that he might sympathize with the lowly, with us. And then Jesus' own words here in Matthew 11, 28-30, Jesus says, Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

[ 12 : 05 ] Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

And then verse 30 says, For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. And the ultimate act of compassion was his rescue mission for our souls.

From the manger, he grew into a man. He lived a perfect, sinless life, teaching, loving the outcasts as he showed compassion to those in need. Then, because he interrupted the religious agenda of power, greed, and self-righteousness, he was conspired against, lied about, arrested, spit on, beaten, and forced to a cross where his purpose collided with our greatest need.

And as he took the sins of the world upon his shoulders, he cried out those words, It is finished. The earth began to shake.

The sky turned dark. The curtain was torn in two. And that's when a soldier who witnessed his death cried out, Surely, this was the Son of God.

[ 13 : 19 ] Then it got quiet for the rest of that day, all day Saturday. And then early Sunday morning, the tomb could hold him no longer as Jesus proved once and for all that he is God.

Death has been defeated by the greatest act of compassion. And the risen Savior offers true life for all who will by faith deny self, pick up their cross daily, and follow him.

So church, I've been walking with Jesus now for 24 years. And I still stand in awe that he would suffer so immensely for a dirt ball like me.

And with all that I've done in my life to spit in his face and I still have my struggles, he says to me, I love you this much with his outstretched hands on the cross.

And because of his overwhelming compassion, compassion, I am compelled to love and show that same compassion to those that God brings in my path. And probably like you, sometimes I do better than others.

[ 14 : 31 ] Compassion to the widow that lost their spouse who may just need a friend. The foster child whose world is turned upside down may just need a family to love them like they've never known before.

The socially awkward person at work might just become a great friend as you invest in them. The guy who's always grumpy may just need someone to overlook his attitude and love him anyways. And I love how Colossians 3.12 says, Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, if you're a follower of Jesus, that's you.

And then he tells us this, clothe yourselves. So cover yourselves, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

Every day, let's make this our prayer. Lord Jesus, showing compassion doesn't always come easy to me. And yet you've shown this to me, this compassion, and you continue to display more of it than I could ever pour out on others.

[ 15 : 36 ] So Lord, teach me how to see those who often get ignored. Make me a hurt-seeking missile that cares for those who are often forgotten. And please let that compassion show the world

that there's a God who loved them so much that he died to set the captive free.

Here am I, Lord. Send me. And church, can you imagine if our spiritual eyes are that wide open to a hurting world, just how much God could use us to impact lives for his kingdom?

And hear me, there are Christians that get the reaching out and loving those in need part, but it's purely about good works. There are churches that have turned their gospel mission into just a good work factory.

They've missed the reality that genuine compassion must be grounded in truth because compassion that enables lifestyles that go against the heart of God, listen, that's no compassion at all.

And I think about the story in John of the woman caught in the act of adultery. For some reason, the man appears to get a free pass, but she is dragged before Jesus in her shame and great fear that she'll be stoned to death for this crime.

[16:53] The religious leaders could care less about this woman and what she did because all they want to do is trap Jesus in his words, have a reason to come against him. And when they ask him what he would do, Jesus finally says, he who is without sin, let them cast the first stone.

And it says, they went away leaving her unscathed. And that's when Jesus asked her, has no one condemned you? And you can almost see the relief through her fearful tears as she says, no one, sir.

And then Jesus speaks words that I'd almost guarantee changed her life. He says, then neither do I condemn you. And if he stopped there, then fine, just do you, boo-boo, right?

But he doesn't stop there. He's not okay with the pain that she has caused families by this ungodly and selfish act and the guy is just as guilty.

And after saving her life, Jesus looks her in the eyes and he says, go now and leave your life of sin. See, it isn't enough to just show compassion, but that compassion must shine a light on the cross displaying the one who is the way, the truth, and the life that no one comes to the Father except through Jesus.

[18:18] Because the goal of compassion is that others may come to know the hope that you and I have in Christ. And I pray that we can look at Jesus' tender heart and unmatched care for people and praise him for his limitless compassion.

and I also pray that his compassion will flow through us in a way that impacts this world with the truth. So, after looking at his compassion that is limitless over us, we can say, lesson learned.

And then second and final lesson for today is trust his unmatched power and unlimited resources. See, what separated Jesus from the others is that his compassion was backed up by his unmatched power and unlimited resources.

So, let me show you as we kind of go back here to Matthew 15 and pick up in verse 32 with me. It says, Jesus called his disciples to him and said, I have compassion for these people.

They have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry or they may collapse on the way. His disciples answered, Where can we get enough bread in this remote place to feed such a crowd?

[19:39] How many loaves do you have? Jesus asked. Seven, they replied, and a few small fish. He told the crowd to sit down on the ground, then he took the seven loaves and the fish and when he had given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples and they in turn gave them to the people.

So listen, don't ever, ever sit under or buy into teaching that tries to explain away the miracles of Jesus. This is a compassionate act of God here showing that Jesus is the long awaited Messiah. But don't forget that probably a month or two, three at the most before this, he had fed the 5,000 with five loaves and two fish. So his disciples have seen him do a similar miracle.

They know the unmatched power, the unlimited resources that he has as the one who created everything and the one who owns the cattle on a thousand hills. And when they say, where could we get enough bread in this remote place to feed such a crowd, it's not that they're questioning Jesus, but they're simply stating a fact that hey, we don't have enough money in stock, or I'm sorry, enough food in stock, and there's not a market close by.

Jesus, you're going to have to do this basically. So, he does. He takes seven loaves, a few fish, gives thanks, multiplies it, and feeds all the people.

[ 21 : 09 ] But still, what we call in the theological world, the liberal theologians, who are always trying to explain away the miracles, they would put it like this. They would explain it away like this.

They would say, well, most likely they pulled out seven loaves and three fish, and others kind of overhear that they had overheard that, and so they had a few more who were willing to sacrifice the rest of their food supply, and then others heard about that, and one by one, families started saying, well, I guess we got a couple extra loaves and fish that we've kind of set back for the right home, and by the way, right is their feet.

I guess we'll give those two, and lo and behold, one selfless act after another inspired another, and they collected enough food so 12,000 to 20,000 people could at least eat something.

That is garbage, okay? Garbage, because Jesus already had compassion on them, because he knew they may collapse on their way, because they don't have any more food.

So he takes this small amount of fish, this bread, and his compassion opens the door for his power and provision to meet a need. That's the Savior we serve, the one who sees every minute detail, and even cares about making sure you have the strength for what's in front of you.

[ 22 : 34 ] And this is one reason why I pay very close attention to details, even though I've been told I can be way too meticulous. Because I believe with all my heart that it's the little things in life that you don't have to do, that no one would notice if you didn't do.

Those are the things that truly make all the difference. So pay close attention to the people around you. Watch for ways that you can meet needs. Show compassion.

Go the extra mile. And I love how the famous speaker Zig Ziglar put this. He said, there are no traffic jams on the extra mile.

And did you catch what verse 37 said? It says, they all ate and were satisfied. Afterwards, the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

A couple things here. First, that word satisfied means that everyone ate until they were completely full. full. It wasn't just I had a few bites to tie me over. It was closer to I just went to Stone's chicken buffet and now I'm waddling out of here longing for my sweatpants type of fool.

[ 23 : 47 ] And even if it wasn't gorging themselves, they were satisfied. They were full. Because when Jesus does something, it's done with excellence. It's done with compassion.

And he expects the same thing from those of us made in his image and covered by his blood. And then it says, second, that they had seven basketfuls remaining.

Now if you remember when they fed the 5,000, they had 12 basketfuls left over. But, major difference here. They were different types of baskets.

So with the feeding of the 5,000, it was called a kofinos. That's what the Jews used to take with them that could often hold maybe a meal or two. Okay? Basically like a to-go container for us today. But here in this story, the feeding of the 4,000, it's the word sporidus, a basket that Gentiles often used that were really big.

[ 24 : 46 ] In fact, this same type of basket was used in Acts 9, verse 25, when they lowered Paul down through a hole in the wall of a city in Damascus to escape persecution.

So it was big enough for a grown man to fit in, which just shows the crazy amount, seven of those, full of leftovers, and it shows the reality that, hey, this was a miracle from God because there was no way they could have had that much food on them.

Now, let's bring this baby home, okay? In our lives, we can trust both God's unmatched power and unlimited resources. The Apostle Paul even put it like this when describing God's provision over his own life in Philippians 4, 19.

He says, And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.

Church, we could pass a mic throughout our sanctuary on a Sunday morning and tell story after story of a God who came through in the impossible.

[ 25 : 58 ] When there was too much month left over at the end of my money, when the food was gone, when the lights were going to get shut off, when the bills weren't going to get paid, when everything was falling to pieces, and it's amazing how God prompts people to action.

Or that unexpected check shows up in the mail that I didn't even know anything about. See, he's got you under control when you're faithful to follow him.

And family, I will never shy away from encouraging all of us to take God at his word and give faithfully to him because I've seen his faithfulness, his promises, in my own life.

And I love what Jesus says in Luke 6.38 when he says this, and you can take it to the bank, he says, give and it will be given to you. A good measure pressed down, shaken together, and running over.

Just picture that overflow will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. So let's land this plane, okay? And just like the husband who won't tell his wife that her hair, her messy bun is too messy again, today we can step back from this story of Jesus' compassion that led him to miraculously heal those in need and feed the multitude, we can kind of step back and say, you know what?

[ 27 : 28 ] Lesson learned. I will praise him for his compassion over me and my family, and I will seek to show that to others. And also, I can trust Jesus because his power and his unlimited resources, they are more than enough for me.

So church, say this with me, ready? Lesson learned. One more time, lesson learned. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we are so very grateful for these words of life that you have spoken over us today. Take these words, stir our hearts, and help us to trust you because you are awesome, because you love us, and because you have us in the palm of your hands. Father, help us to grow and mature every day in our walk with you so that we can be molded and shaped more and more into the image of Christ.

It's in his precious name we pray. And God's people said, amen and amen. Hey, just want to give you a quick invitation. If you are listening to this and you'd like to talk about maybe giving your heart to Jesus, maybe you just have questions about faith.

Maybe you'd like to talk about our church and questions you may have about First Christian Church of Greensburg, Indiana. So, please, reach out to us. Here's a couple ways you can do that.

[ 28 : 52 ] You can call the church office, 812-663-8488, or you can email me at ray at fccgreensburg.com.

Hey, God bless you, and thank you for tuning in today to the preaching of God's word. God bless you,