

Compassion, Call and Commitment

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[0 : 00] He, Jesus, left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, James and John.

On Monday evening, last, at the opening of our General Assembly, Derek Lament and his sermonist, retiring moderator, Derek Preach, from Matthew 9, on the compassion and the call of Jesus, the compassion of Jesus, and seeing the crowds before him, crowds who are like sheep without a shepherd.

Jesus' heart, reaching out to these people, these people helpless, unable to save themselves. And then, secondly, in that same chapter, the call of Jesus, the call of mission, sending out into the harvest field for the reaping of sinners, to bring sinners into the kingdom of God.

I listened to that sermon online, as I know that Jim and John Angus were there listening in person. Maybe some of you listened online, but anyway, as I was listening online, I was listening online, I was very much struck by Derek's own compassion for the lost, and his own calling and mission to see soul saved.

And of course, it's surely for us, for each one of us here, to be Christ-like in our compassion, in our compassion for the lost, and in responding to the call of Jesus to pray that God would send out harvesters into the harvest field.

[1 : 47] Into the harvest field, into the mission field, that those who are called out as harvesters gather in the sheaves of the lost, bringing in that harvest of soul.

And, you know, we see this, these great biblical truths of compassion and call, that we see it throughout Scripture. And particularly when we think of the Lord Jesus, the compassion and call of Jesus, then we see these aspects of his ministry, well, reflected here in his actions in Galilee, particularly in the way that Mark records Jesus' healing ministry.

When we see here Jesus' compassion towards the sick, and we see the call of Jesus given to follow me, says Jesus, follow me to, he says to the disciples. And in the case of the disciples, we see them obeying that call and following him.

But also we see too, don't we, the commitment of Jesus and the corresponding commitment of his disciples to serve the Savior, where Jesus would lead them to serve.

So, compassion, call, commitment. And we'll look at this evening, particularly in relation to the passage, the little passage we have here from verse 29 to 34.

[3 : 11] But before we launch straight into that passage, obviously we need to get the background. Because if you go from verse 21, where we began reading this evening, down to verse 34, if you look carefully, you'll see in fact what Mark's showing us is a day in the life of Jesus.

A day in the life of his earthly ministry. And it's a day that's shown in three parts. The first part we looked at last Lord's Day evening, that incident of Jesus in the synagogue, Jesus teaching with authority, and Jesus healing with authority, Jesus healing that man possessed with the unclean spirit, Jesus showing his authority over the demonic world.

It was the first part of the day. But then, we read there at the start of verse 29, we read of the second part of the day. For Jesus healed Simon's mother-in-law.

And then, just a little bit further on, the same passage we read, the third part of the day, we come to the evening, we see Jesus healing the sick. And again, the demon-possessed.

And it's these last two parts of that day, that Sabbath, that's what we want to focus on this Lord's Day. Because, as we've said already, what we see here is the compassion of Jesus.

[4 : 34] The compassion in his love, in his care for body and soul, in his authority over sickness itself, in his authority over every realm of life.

And, you know, as we consider Jesus' care, or the extent of Jesus' care and commitment towards the helpless, towards the weak who can't save themselves, as we consider even the obedience of the disciples to the call of Jesus to follow him, then what we're seeing truly and surely is our lessons for us to follow.

Yes, in seeing the Lord Jesus and his compassion. Yes, in seeing the response of his followers in that call to serve him. And as we say, to consider our own commitment to the Lord Jesus as we see his commitment to the Lord's.

Well, I did mention compassion, call and commitment. I think we'll reverse it slightly when we start looking at the passage. We'll look at call, first of all.

As we said, I mean, Jesus has already shown his authority that first part of that Sabbath day. But he's not finished with his ministry after that. I mean, we're told, as we said at the start of verse 29, again, notice one of Mark's favourite words, immediately.

[5 : 58] Immediately, immediately, Jesus goes to the home of Simon and Andrew. And, of course, the other two disciples who have been called by Jesus, they accompany Jesus to that home.

And what are we told there? We're told that in that house, the houses were quite small, of course, in these days, but somewhere in that house, Simon's mother-in-law is lying sick in bed with a fever.

And again, notice the immediacy of everything that's happening.

We're told that immediately, verse 30, immediately the disciples tell Jesus about her. So, obviously, she's been in another part of that small house.

The disciples are telling Jesus that Simon's mother-in-law has got that particular sickness. Now, let's just pause there. Before we move on any further, you know, in the passage, just look at what we've been reading there of the disciples.

They tell Jesus, verse 30, they told him about her. They told. In other words, they called on Jesus. I mean, the one who called these four men, these four men who became disciples, the one who called these four men to leave their nets and follow him, Jesus has been followed into that house.

[7 : 16] And he's been called upon to perform an act of healing, an act of healing in this sick woman. I mean, as far as these, you know, just think of these four disciples. Just a short time before, they've been working with nets.

They've been catching fish. But they'd responded to that call of Jesus to follow him. And they're doing exactly that. They're following him. They're following him, not just physically following him, you know, physically going where Jesus is going, in this case to the house of Simon's mother-in-law.

But they're following Jesus in faith. They're trusting in Jesus. They're trusting in Jesus that what they've already witnessed in Jesus healing the demon-possessed man in the synagogue, they're following Jesus by faith, knowing that the same Jesus can heal the sick mother-in-law, Simon. And they're following Jesus, it seems, in making Jesus the first port of Colossus, well, the first result. I mean, such was their awareness of Jesus as the one who could restore the sick, the sick relative there in that house.

They've no hesitation in telling Jesus about this woman because they've recognized Jesus, Jesus' authority, the same authority that cast out that demon in that man.

[8 : 37] And these four disciples had such faith in Jesus. Jesus, who'd shown his authority over the demonic world, had authority over the physical world, authority over sickness and disease.

And, of course, pointing to the truth, Jesus' authority over life and over death. And so here in the example of the disciples and calling on Jesus, Jesus, as we said, as their first resort, in consequence of obeying the call of Jesus to follow him, there's an example here for you and me to follow.

If we believe, if we know and trust in the one who has that authority over every realm of life, that we can trust him in all things and trust him to do all things in perfect wisdom for every aspect of our lives.

Take some examples. You know, when we're ill, for example, who do we contact? Yes, we contact those whom God has blessed in so many areas of help and healing.

Or if we need some kind of professional help, we call on those who are trained to deal with our particular concern. But, of course, our first call, our first call must be to our Lord and Savior, that he would work in the skills of those whom he's blessed with.

[10 : 03] Remember, some years ago, one of our well-known ministers who was very, very seriously ill in hospital, he was at the point of death. And he would later thank God and do so for

many to hear, thank God for his deliverance.

And when some people accused him of ignoring the medical profession, the skills of the medical profession, you know who I'm talking about. David replied that he owed his life to those people. But that he gave glory to God for gifting such people with the skills that enabled him to be restored to health. He acknowledged above all that God had so willed to save him and that God had used these gifted individuals to care for him.

And I'm sure many of you are giving thanks to God for the skills even of the medical profession and the work that's been done maybe for the sake of a loved one, maybe even for yourself.

I know certainly for some within the congregation, the compassion of God, seen in God's grace, seen in what we call God's common grace, God giving to individuals blessings and gifts and resources for the benefit of mankind, irrespective of whether these people know saving grace or not.

[11:21] But of course, it's only those who do know God's saving grace who truly call on God for help in time of need, who call on him in time of trouble and acknowledge his hand in their deliverance.

You see this repeatedly in Scripture, the calling on God, firstly on God for his mercy, to help them, to deliver them, to save them. And we saw that this morning when we were looking at the example of David and his deliverance.

And he called on God for God to rescue him. But then, you know, you go throughout Scripture, think of Jacob. Think of Jacob when he called on God, when he feared the wrath of his brother Esau. Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother. This is Jacob's prayer to God. For I fear him. Or think of Lazarus, when Lazarus was sick.

What do we read of his sisters, Martha and Mary? They immediately sent for Jesus. They told Jesus, the one whom Jesus loves, was ill. Especially in the Psalms.

[12:26] We've mentioned Psalm 34. You go to many, many of the Psalms. And again you see that the Psalmist's first port of call is to God. Psalm 18. In my distress, I called upon the Lord.

To my God, I cried for help. Psalm 116. I called on the name of the Lord. O Lord, I pray, deliver my soul. Then again, the same Psalm, when I was brought low, he saved me.

Psalm 120. In my distress, I called to the Lord. And he answered me. Why did the various Psalmists, why did they call on God? Because the Psalmists knew that God is a God of compassion.

Who bids us, who bids you to call on him in time of trouble. And so it's for you, and it's for me, to call on God.

That God would show his mercy towards you for, and for all for whom you, you're crying out even now for his mercy to be displayed. Even now, in the quiet of your heart, why don't you call upon God?

[13:31] To call upon God for his mercy. To be upon those for whom you have a particular burden. Maybe it's a family member who's not yet a Christian. Maybe it's a loved one who's suffering particularly in some kind of suffering of mind or suffering of body.

Maybe it's a backslidden friend or a family member. Pray. Pray for God's healing. Pray for that healing to be upon that individual. Pray for God's grace and God's mercy.

Pray that you will acknowledge that his compassions are new every morning because great is his faithfulness. The author of Lamentations wrote, I mean, his compassions never fail.

They are new every morning. And, you know, that really, I suppose, weaves us into this next part on compassion. We've looked at the call of Jesus to those who follow him to do his will, to have that faith and trust in the Lord Jesus.

But then, notice, secondly, the compassion of Jesus. I mean, we've talked about the author there of Lamentations saying that God's compassions never fail.

[14:46] Well, we see, certainly in this passage, Jesus' compassion never failing in his healing of Simon's mother-in-law. And look at the way that, it's a beautiful description of Jesus healing this woman.

Look at verse 31. Look at, it's an extraordinarily wonderful way of description. Look at what Mark tells him. He tells him, of course, you know, Peter was in the room, Simon Peter was in the room, of course, and Peter telling Mark what happened.

He's told that Jesus took Simon's mother-in-law by the hand. I think the words literally grasp her hand. There's the touch of compassion.

There's Jesus in that very touch showing that he's willing to cure Simon's mother-in-law and he's going to be able to heal himself out of that fever. And in that, holding her hand, if he's grasping her hand, he raises her up.

And I don't think that's just to show a physical healing, but surely more to reveal the work of Jesus in raising up sinners to himself.

[15:57] You know, in everyday medical healing, whether it happens in a home or in hospital, human touch is so vital. It's such a vital ingredient in the process of healing.

How much more the touch of the Lord Jesus in anyone's life. Much more that touch, the touch of Jesus' compassion is even the touch of that compassionate heart that cares for every aspect of your life.

He cares for you in every area of your life so that you can serve him and serve him in the strength that he gives you. That he shows his compassion to you.

That it's a real compassion. And the fact that he gives you these opportunities of service because he cares. He cares that you are unable to serve him but there's a gift that he's given you.

Now, we see that in the case of Simon's mother-in-law here. Her healing was complete. Her healing was so complete, you see, as we said in verse 31, what are we told?

[17:02] She begins to serve him. After she's restored, picked up, she begins to serve him. She's obviously going to make a meal for them. And she's that renewed energy that there she is doing what she normally would do.

There's the mercy and compassion of Jesus such that that lady was able to resume her domestic responsibility. And you might think, well, isn't this all very practical?

You might think, well, where's the high kind of spirituality that we're expected to hear about? But surely that's the point, isn't it? You know, that in your everyday service for the Lord, he gives you that necessary strength and ability to do his will in what we might think of as the ordinary matters of life, which in fact are not ordinary.

They're acts of service in his name. Acts of service that God in his compassion enables you to perform for his glory, for his name's sake.

Whether it's a mother at home with her children, whether it's a teacher doing her work in the classroom, whether it's a worker doing the work that God has gifted them to do, you know, all the blessings, all the blessings given to each one of God's children are given as a result of God's compassion to enable you, to enable me, to do the work that God has given us to do according to his will and for his glory, and that we rejoin in doing that work.

[18:34] And, you know, especially in this particular context, it's a short, so much of Mark's gospel is a short, short extract, short narrative that really bring home what Mark is teaching us of the Lord Jesus in this little section here, the emphasis on Jesus' compassion.

He says, compassion for individuals who can't save themselves. And notice, as we go deeper into the passage, we're seeing here that Jesus gives time for individuals.

Jesus gives time for individuals in their weakness, giving time through his healing touch. Last week, those of you who were here, we noticed Jesus healing of another individual, that man with the unclean spirit.

healing that happened during the time that Jesus was teaching the word in that little synagogue in Capernaum. There we saw that Jesus' mission was to deliver souls that had been gripped by the power of evil.

And we saw there that by his word, the demon, the unclean spirit, came out of that man, that man who couldn't free himself from that possession. salvation. Again, as we said, that sure testimony of the authority and power of Jesus over the forces of Satan, showing, telling us of Jesus' purpose in his mission to save sinners, to free men and women from the power of sin.

[20:07] And that instant, that morning, of that Sabbath morning, showing again there one individual in that crowd of people, one individual delivered.

And now in the case of the healing of Simon's mother-in-law, again this healing of this individual, this woman who couldn't heal herself from her sickness, again this healing indicating something of Jesus' power and authority to heal, yes, to heal us of her spiritual sickness, from which none of us can save ourselves from.

And then we notice of course in that passage the healing of this sick woman. It's followed later in that third part of the day in the evening, further healings by Jesus of the sick and the demon possessed.

Again, showing us the compassion of Jesus. Later on in Jesus' ministry, Jesus would quote from Isaiah the prophet, Jesus quoting from Isaiah in a passage that indicated the purpose, of Jesus' healing ministry.

You've got to look for verse 18, the spirit of the Lord is upon me because he's anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and then recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. [21 : 32] In a nutshell, we might say there's the compassion of Jesus for the lost, his compassion for the spiritually oppressed who can't save themselves. Jesus has come to set you free.

So it's for you and me to rejoice and to praise God for the compassion of the Savior, that compassion that's rooted in the love of Jesus for sinners, sinners such as ourselves.

Because of course without that compassion, we'd all be lost eternally. without the compassion of Jesus, we wouldn't know his love, we wouldn't know his grace, we wouldn't know his mercy, we would know no favor from God.

All we'd know would be his wrath and his curse. And that surely should bring us to ourselves. And that each one of us asks in the quiet of our own heart, who's my compassion?

Who's my compassion for the Lord? And, you know, again ask yourself, am I responding to the call of Jesus, to the call to follow Jesus, to exercise a ministry of compassion, and not just a kind of passive hands-off interest in seeing sinners saved, but actually doing something about it?

[22 : 53] Where's your compassion? Where's my compassion for the Lord? Am I demonstrating that in my prayer life, for example? Am I praying for as yet unsaved friends and family?

Where's my compassion if I'm keeping quiet about my faith before a non-believer? What good am I if I know and don't do? If I see and don't say, if I look right through you, if I turn a deaf ear to the thundering cry?

What good am I? And certainly in the last week I've been very challenged by the passage we read in Ezekiel 34. that passage we read where God directs His anger at unfaithful leaders of the people, religious leaders of the people of Israel.

Their lack of compassion for the spiritual needs of the people and their care. And you know, again, as we read these words, as we were listening to these words of God in judgment against these unfaithful leaders, you know, even as I read them, I had to ask, was there shame in my heart?

As you listened to them, what was your response to these words? Because what we read there was the indictment of neglect of the sheep of the flock of God. And the result, as we're told, the people strayed.

[24 : 18] Fair game for those who devour them. Now, of course, the words of judgment against the religious leaders of Israel, they're not just applied, of course, to church leaders in today's context, of course, but surely to every Christian.

Each one of us has a responsibility of compassion. Compassion to the weakened faith.

Compassion to the spiritual thing. A responsibility towards those who have strayed from the narrow road and gone down every side road there is where there's so much danger to their very soul.

So it's for you and me to heed the word of God and well and do as God declared towards his people as we read on in that chapter. I'll read these words again.

Just think here of the compassion of God towards the wandering, towards those who have strayed. I will seek the lost. I will bring back the strayed. I will bind up the injured.

I will strengthen the weak. These are words that tell directly and point us to the mission of the Lord Jesus in his compassion towards the lost, towards the strayed.

[25 : 31] And then, you know, again, bring this to ourselves. Is there anyone whom you know, even anyone, even in this congregation, who's lost? Well, tell them of the same year.

Tell them of the one who came to seek and to save that which is lost. Are there any among us who have strayed? Maybe wandered and backslidden practices?

Go and fetch them. Let them hear again of the love of Jesus towards the lost. Tell them of the Savior who brought back the prodigal.

Is there anyone weak in faith? Anyone struggling with faith will assure them of the love of the Lord Jesus for sinners. Every Christian has a part to play in exercising a ministry of compassion towards

those who are suffering in spirit.

Because that finally leads us to commitment. It's been called compassion and commitment.

Because on that third part of that Sabbath day, we see commitment.

[26 : 41] We see devotion. We see dedication. We see the commitment of Jesus, the dedication of Jesus. We see that expressed in his healing ministry.

You know, let's go back to the healing of Simon's mother-in-law for a moment. I mean, notice what she had that was wrong with her. She had a fever. Now, fever can cover many things.

The suggestion certainly wasn't life-threatening. And certainly also in the society of the day, a woman wasn't considered high in priority. But Jesus had just taught in the synagogue, he just

healed in the synagogue, and he'd gone to this nearby house, obviously for a rest and a meal.

But the demands of the sick woman were no burden to Jesus. Jesus made time for that woman in

her need. There's his commitment, there's his devotion and his love, that Jesus went willingly to

cure this woman and to cure her completely of that fever that had so oppressed her.

Why? Because as Jesus said elsewhere, he must do the work that his father has given him to do, yet to show who he is and his identity as the Christ. Jesus, remember, had come to deliver his people from the oppression of sin and to bring salvation to them.

[28 : 03] And then that third part of the day from verse 32 to 34, after that full Sabbath in the synagogue and then in that little house, what are we told?

There are now crowds, crowds gathered outside. They brought their sick to Jesus. They want their sick healed. And we're told in verse 34 that, what, did he cast them away? Did he tell them to go away?

No. He healed many, including the demons of sin. In his devotion, in his commitment, he was showing his identity as the one who'd come to save and deliver.

And so he would perform these miracles of healing, even the healing of the demon possessed. He was turning people to see, yes, he is the Lord, he is the Savior.

Savior. But of course, what do we notice at the end that he wouldn't permit the demons to speak because they knew him. Jesus didn't want to be seen just as a miracle worker only, you know, some kind of spectacular worker of miracles.

[29 : 08] No, he wanted people to put their faith and trust in him as the Messiah, as the Christ. And again, showing his commitment, showing his commitment to serve and to save and not seek popular acclaim, you know, through the miracles he performed.

So Jesus here in this little passage we've looked at, 29 to 34, showing his commitment to the marginalized, giving time, time to whomsoever called on him for mercy.

He's shown his commitment. Commitment to the ongoing work of the kingdom in delivering people from sin. And so, what's our response to all of this?

What's your response? Well, it's for you, it's for me to follow Jesus, to continue to follow him, to continue in our commitment in our serving him.

Yes, and being prepared to spend and be spent in the work of the kingdom. Today, as I was just looking at the fact earlier, this afternoon, today, is the anniversary of the death of John Calvin.

[30 : 18] And there's an excellent article, when you get Crossway, or read Crossway, you'll see an excellent article in John Calvin's last days. And in that article, there's that emphasis on John Calvin, the great servant of God, spending and being spent in the work of the kingdom.

If you've got time, look at it, read of his last days, that, you know, even these last moments of his life, he didn't sit back. He was determined even to the very end to serve his Lord and Master in full commitment to the call that he'd been given to follow Jesus.

We've got a challenge here. We've got a challenge. We've got a challenge as individuals, and it's a challenge as a congregation. It's a challenge of commitment.

It's a challenge of commitment to the gospel. gospel. And, you know, we've got to ask ourselves in all seriousness, are we committed to seeing the spread of the gospel in this town and in the wider parts of areas of West Lothian?

Do we truly want to see God's church grow? Or are we simply concerned about our own little world without a missional mindset? Do we truly want to see God's word spread into the highways and byways of this area and beyond?

[31 : 34] We pray that, yes, one of the themes of the assembly was revitalization. Well, what about revitalizing our heart? Pray that God would revitalize our heart, yes, and revitalize our church.

