

Becoming like Jesus in His compassion for the fallen

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[0 : 00] So, good morning, everyone, and I hope you enjoyed worshipping the Lord as much as we did. That song was great, wasn't it? You may not have known it, but by golly, you picked it up quick. Well done, you.

So, we're talking about the Vision Month this month, and it's becoming like Jesus by being compassionate to the fallen. So, just to let you know that we enter under this and the understanding in chapter 7 that there was a lot of confusion about who Jesus was.

The Pharisees wanted to prove him wrong as well. So, a lot of the Jews, a lot of people around there kept saying, he can't be the Messiah. We know where he comes from, and Scripture says we shouldn't know where he comes from.

Well, Jesus said, I am from him who sent me. They were thinking Galilee. He was telling them heaven. But they didn't get it. And then they kept saying, well, Jesus teaches like no one else has taught before, and he performs miracles.

And it's right, he did. But they questioned that. They said, oh, well, you know, maybe the Messiah will know more. Maybe he'll do more. We always do that, don't we?

[1 : 12] When something's right in front of our face, we think, surely there's got to be a bit more. There wasn't any more. This was it. Jesus said, my teaching isn't my own. It comes from the one who sent me, and it is for his glory.

And I love this bit. Jesus said, I'll be going where you cannot find me, and you cannot come. They were thinking Greece, and he was talking heaven. It was so odd.

The Pharisees thought he was a deceiver. The Jews just thought he was, well, they were plain confused. They didn't get who he was, did they? And yet Jesus had compassion on all of these fallen people before him.

And he went on to the Mount of Olives to teach them. And then up at the crack of dawn, he began teaching again. And I love that he got up at the crack of dawn, because he's a proper teacher. Gets up early and gets the job done, doesn't he, Andy? No rest for the teachers, they say. And there's an argument that this passage actually shouldn't be there. John 7, 35 to 8, 11 was not found in earlier manuscripts, and some ancient witnesses actually didn't note it.

[2 : 21] Many have debated that it splits up this passage. But listen to this, because I think the word speaks for the word itself. Psalm 12, 6 says this, the words of the Lord are flawless.

Psalm 19, 7 says, the law of the Lord is perfect. Proverbs 35 says, every word of God is pure. And 2 Timothy 3, 16 says, all scripture is God-breathed.

So whether it was a historical omission or not, whether we understand why it's there or not, it's there because God needs us to hear something from it. He needs us to learn something.

So I pray that today, you and I learn loads, or even just a little bit, that we can take home and use for his kingdom. So the take-home lesson today is to become like Jesus by being compassionate to the falling.

Next slide, Josh. So John 8, 1 to 2 tells us how Jesus came back down to the Mount of Olives, how he came back to the temple.

[3 : 28] And he sat and gathered the people around him. You get the impression that there was a big audience there. And then enter the Pharisees. Now, this was a musical. You'd hear the music crescendo and build up because the Pharisees are coming, the baddies are coming.

And I just, that's how my mind works. I just imagine this music and this parade of the Pharisees walking in. And they paraded this woman in front of them. And they said, and they made a stand in

front of Jesus and the group of people and said, this woman is caught in the act of adultery. In the law of Moses, it's commanded us to stone such a woman. Now, what do you say? And I can imagine them looking him in the eye. Well, what do you say? That's the law. The punishment fits the crime, you say. Well, that's what they were hoping Jesus would say. You see, we know this because verse 6 says they wanted to catch Jesus out. They were using this as a trap in order to have a basis for accusing him. What were they going to accuse him of? Well, if he let her go, he'd break the law of Moses. If he said, execute her, then he'd break the Roman law because the Jews weren't allowed to execute people for religious offenses. [4 : 39] And let's get something really straight here. This was not something that happened every week. This wasn't a regular occurrence. It was quite rare because two people had to witness them in the act.

I'm not going to tell you what it is, but you know what I mean. So they had to be seen and witnessed by two people. It was rare. But I love Jesus' compassion in this. I really love it because his first act of compassion was that he didn't even look at the accusers or even speak to them. Now, we're often very quick to speak, aren't we, if somebody accuses us of something or tries to catch us out. But Jesus didn't do that. And his second act of compassion was to stoop down. And I imagine that he was probably stooping down to the level that the woman felt she was at. I don't think she could have got any lower, really. He went down and he started to write on the ground with his finger. And you know, this didn't stop them badgering him. [5 : 38] They were persistent in their quest. You know, I imagine them like baying wolves, going at him, saying, go on. And they wanted to catch Jesus out.

That hapless woman was just used there as a tool to get at him. Their quarry was Jesus. Don't get that wrong. And this was religion without compassion. Next slide, Josh. But also, don't get me wrong about this. And don't get Jesus wrong either. Sin should be dealt with and should be stopped. But Jesus showed compassion on all of the fallen in his actions. He didn't point a finger. And he didn't make their sin public. And did you know there was no place more public than the temple courts at that time? It was a bit like you and me going on the big screen.

And it was a big crowd. We've already established that, that Jesus had a big crowd with him. But Jesus shows us the compassion that he showed then and now. We are all part of a fallen race. [6 : 38] But by grace, his grace, we are spared the punishment and the headlines in the news. Imagine if God had a newspaper that recorded our sins. How tedious it would be for all of you to read my sins and misdemeanors on a daily basis.

That would keep you busy for a while. How boring would it be for me to read yours? I don't think I'd want to. Oh, but we do love a bit of juicy gossip, don't we? A celebrity falls into that category. Well, I wouldn't want to be famous. Because no sooner are you famous than you're made infamous. No sooner are you put on the pedestal than you're kicked off and knocked to the ground. I don't think I'd want to be there. Well, this lady was the celebrity of that day and so was Jesus. The Pharisees had their headlines set out all ready for print. Jesus forgives a sinner. How dare he? Who does he think he is? God? You can just imagine it, can't you? They clearly didn't know and they clearly didn't give up. Because verse 7 tells us that when they kept questioning Jesus, he straightened up and he said to them this. [7 : 45] Let any one of you, we all know this one pretty well, don't we? Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her. But again, straight after that, he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

Now up to that point, Jesus' writing had been ignored. And now it was impossible to ignore. Why did it become impossible? Because he looked them squarely in the eye. He still showed compassion to them. He didn't point a public finger. He didn't point at everyone and say, you, you and you, this is what you did. I'm absolutely sure, I don't think I'd be that gracious. But he was gracious and he was compassionate. And it's often thought, what did he write? Did he write, you stinkers? No. You hypocrites, you brood of vipers.

Well, he said that a few times, didn't he? At least once. Did he write the sins of the ones that were watching, including hers? Was it about the Ten Commandments? Let's face it, this is what this crime was, adultery.

[8 : 51] Or did he simply write what he had said? Let any one of you who's without sin cast the first stone at her. Over and over again, like lines for a bunch of naughty boys.

Whatever it was, they eventually got the message. But not without a fight. Now, at the tender age I am, I've learned that it's far easier to listen to the Holy Spirit convicting me of my problems and my sins and where I'm falling than to fight and defend my sin.

We do that sometimes, don't we? Defend our sin. And just like those Pharisees, I think we sometimes need to be looked squarely in the eye by God. Squarely in the eye by the Holy Spirit. Convicting of what's wrong. And show us the ugly results of our delicious sin. Because sin is usually nice. Otherwise we wouldn't do it, would we? Or wouldn't it be much easier if we listened to the first time?

Or we didn't sin at all. It would be far less embarrassing and far less painful. But some finally got it. And when we read in verse 9, it said this.

[9 : 59] At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time. The older ones first until Jesus was left with a woman still standing there.

I love that the older ones heard first. Because that means there's hope for me. But listen to this, you young ones. Pointing their fingers, looking nowhere. You need to listen earlier.

Take note. And we see in verses 10 and 11 that Jesus straightened up. And I can imagine him being the gentle man that he is.

Holding his hand out to her. And clasping it gently. And looking her in the eye. And saying, woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?

And she says, no one, sir. And he says, neither do I. Neither do I condemn you. Just go and leave your life of sin. That was Jesus' compassion for the convicted.

[11 : 00] Next slide, Josh. We're not told here that she said sorry. We're not told here that she repented of her sin. I can imagine she was in shock and disbelief.

She got away with her life. Literally. But her life was expected to change. He said, go and leave your sin.

Go and leave your life of sin. Go and leave your adulterous man. Go and leave the sin that got you so close to death you could taste it. You've been reprieved by my grace.

By my love. But you're only free if you let go of the prison that encompassed you all your life. You see, sin is a prison that encompasses you.

It may feel nice at the time. But it is a prison. Truly it is. Jesus, with that one sentence, was showing his compassion on the fallen woman.

[12 : 00] He was saying, I know where you've gone wrong. It's not debatable that you sinned. But there is a way out from all of this. Just stop doing it.

It's for your own good and for those around you too. So if anyone is burdened with a sin, feeling like they are trapped or can't be forgiven, listen to what Jesus said to this woman with compassion.

And this passage raises the question of who are the fallen? We've already established it was the women and the Pharisees that pointed their fingers. But are there degrees of fallenness?

Like a sinkhole. They are catastrophic, aren't they? And even if it's a small sinkhole, it still leaves a scar, a blight on the land. But let's go with the deepest fallen.

Some might as well be wearing a neon scythe that says fallen on their foreheads. It's easy to pick on the big ones, isn't it? The prostitute, the embezzler, the thief, the murderer.

[13 : 05] Next slide, Josh, I think. Not sure. I'll back one. Go back. Two. But Jesus and the Bible shows us that every single time God can turn a label of the fallen inside out.

And I love that. It's all for the glory of his kingdom. But he does it for the benefit of you and me, too. Let's look at the prostitute that lived in Jericho.

Well, she saved her family and then became a member of the Israelite family and actually married. Now, that's a nice one, isn't it? She was saved from giving her body in sin to giving her body in love to a man called Salmon later.

The embezzler. Well, tax collectors were known as embezzlers. So we think of Matthew. Matthew left his life of greed and money and he went to follow Jesus and became a disciple.

The thief on the cross. Right on the cross. Jesus listened to his heart. His repentant heart and said, today you will be with me in paradise. The murderer.

[14:17] The one that had his scales of hatred for Christians removed from his eyes. Was baptized, given a new name and sent out to be an evangelist. That was Paul. So let's go back right to the beginning of fallenness.

I don't know if that's a real word, but it sounds good to me. Fallenness. When Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden, do you think, oh, that's mean of God. They were living in such a lovely place.

Well, by doing this, God was compassionate not only to them, but to us. Because had they stayed, they could have eaten from the tree of life. And they and us would be stuck in a life of sin forever. Thank God that he stopped them living in the Garden of Eden and taking from the tree of life. Thank God that you and I were banned from the Garden of Eden too. Thank God he sent Jesus to deal with our sin so that we can live our forever life without all of this rubbish that we carry on earth, display and give out.

God's plan was and is for sin to be overcome so that we can have an eternity with him without all that. But sin had to be dealt with first and it had to be put to death.

[15:32] And the only way to do that was through Jesus. Jesus sacrificed himself so that we could have a life in him and a life with God could begin. That was Jesus and God's compassionate heart for us.

You know, we can't forgive sin against God like Jesus did. So how can we show compassion for the fallen? Well, let's tackle this question with this with a question that I hope will illustrate to us where we are and where we need to be when showing compassion to the fallen.

When we read in Luke 7, we read of a prostitute that washed Jesus' feet, repentant from her life with her tears and with perfume. What do you see?

Do you see a prostitute? Do you see a forgiven new creation? We'd hope that we'd say that we see the forgiven, cleansed and whole, relieved of her sin with a bright new future.

Don't we? But I love that Jesus saw that before she came to his feet with her tears and her perfume.

[16:48] He saw a new creation before she came to him and asked to be forgiven. Romans 5, 8 to 9 says that Christ died whilst we, you and I, were sinners too.

He doesn't wait for us to be good so that we can be good. He waits for us to recognize we're bad so we can be good. And that's his compassion on us.

I want you to think on Saul who became Paul. When we read his story, do we dwell on who he was or what he became? In Acts 9, 13, Ananias was petrified to bring God's compassion to Saul.

He remembered and was dwelling on the reports of this man who killed Christians as a rule. And he didn't want to go there and be one of the numbers that was killed. But God's reply to him, Jesus' reply to him was this, I've chosen him to be one of mine, to be an evangelist for me.

I've paraphrased that. And he finished with, I'll show him how much he must suffer for my name. I wonder if Ananias thought, oh, that's it. He's going to suffer. I'm your man.

[17:58] I'll go and tell him. But it wasn't. It wasn't Ananias' heart. Ananias was convicted by God to go and bring his compassion to this man.

And notice in the Bible the depth and wealth of information and the story of Paul's life before, compared to Saul's life.

We've got so much more. This good deeds, his good life, his conversion is that much greater than his bad deeds and that which was before he met Jesus at the cross.

This clearly shows Jesus' compassion on him. That which stretched beyond the cross was greater than that went before it in time. So we focus on the new creation in the Bible.

The new creation that God made Paul. And rather than the mistakes, then Saul made. And here's a gentle reminder of what your testimony and what your witness should be.

[19:01] Me included. If your testimony is that long of all your misdemeanors and then that short of saying, well, Jesus saved me, you've got it the wrong way around.

It should be that short on what you did before and that long to the back of you, to infinity of what God has done with you beyond.

There's so much more after Jesus, after you've met Jesus than there was before. Please, if you give a testimony, don't harp on the bad stuff you did.

Just say it wasn't so nice. And then tell them what you can do and what God has done with you now. And oh my goodness, isn't it wonderful when he works in your life?

Because then you know you're on the right tracks. Paul's testimony is a perfect example of what ours should be and what our compassion to each other should be too.

[19 : 57] But getting back to this life story, and it is a life story, it did happen. Here's a question I hope that will make us all think. Who do you have compassion for?

Is it the adulterous man? Nah, not at all. He didn't get what he deserved. Where was he when the stones were falling? The adulterous woman?

Nope. She should have kept her eyes off someone else's husband. The adulterous wife? She must have been a bit bad, or a bit awful. She mustn't have been a good wife for him to go astray.

This is what people say. And what about the Pharisees? Nah, they're a finger-pointing lot. Oops.

What about somebody caught in daylight robbery?

Well, they should be banged up. What about murder? Banged up and throw the key away, I say. I've heard that too. I'm saying that gently.

[20 : 55] The Bible says this about these Pharisees, and about us that may point a finger or two. Romans 10, 1-4 says, Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.

For I can testify about them that they're zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

The Pharisees were zealous for God and his law and for their own power. But without knowing who Jesus was, they established their own form of righteousness, not God's.

So if we start to get a bit heavy-handed, maybe we need to look back to the Bible and see what God says, see what Jesus says. Romans 3, 22, 25 says this, We have all fallen short of the glory of God, his standard of affection.

Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes. You see, his compassion was for everyone, all who point fingers.

[22 : 11] But Jesus didn't come to point fingers. He came to show the lost the way to deal with sin. By repenting of our sin and accepting the saving grace that he offers through his sacrifice on the cross, there is no other way.

He did that with a prostitute that washed her feet with her tears and perfume. And so we should do the same with the prostitute and the pimp and the people that use the prostitute that may walk in this church.

He did that with Rahab, Matthew, the thief, and Paul. They all came to understand the compassion and the heart of God for his chosen, and so should we.

God did that for them. He did that for you and me. And so we should do that for anyone inside this church or out of it, wherever you are, whatever you're doing.

And that goes the same for the thief, the burglar, the gambler, the extortionist, the drug abuser, the drug peddler, the sex offender, and the murderer. And the one that is none of these but is a good person that lies anyway and is fallen anyway.

[23 : 24] Now don't get me wrong and don't get Jesus wrong either. Sin should be dealt with and should stop. Punishment of sin is there for a reason, to protect the harm and to put the bad guy on the naughty step to contemplate what he did wrong or she.

But everyone needs compassion and Jesus' compassion is for everyone. Let's face it, he's done it for you and me. We are to become like Jesus and show his compassion.

And Ananias had to become Jesus' compassion for Paul. Well, Saul when he was, but Paul. And that was so God could make him, a blind person, see the truth and so God could make him a new creation in Christ.

And he does that for you and I. He provides us a way out of our sin or every single time the Bible tells us. And it's so simple, it's profound in its simplicity and yet the devil will do all he can to make you think you can't get out of this and you cannot be forgiven.

Let me tell you, that is an out and out lie. You can. For anyone caught in the trap of thinking you won't be forgiven, let me tell you the way.

[24 : 39] Let me show you what Jesus says. This is what you do. You say sorry, but you really mean it from your heart and you repent. What does that mean? Well, it means turn over a new leaf.

And I don't know what that means, I don't know where that phrase comes from, but in my heart it said, you know what, my life is a bit of a book and it's turning a new leaf, a new page, a new chapter, the chapter and the life and the chapters beyond it that far exceed the ones before. I'm not going to go over the book and read the bad bits again, I'm going to go in the front of the book and read all the good bits that come along. It's so much bigger no matter how long you live. I'm going to finish with this. Our friend Mark Trees came to our door. You might have heard me talk about him. It was six weeks to live. And he wanted to find out about Jesus. His express intention was to find out about this saving grace of Jesus. And Mike had the opportunity to sit with him and bring him to the place where he gave his life to Christ just six weeks before he died.

[25 : 48] And he said that those last six weeks of his life were the best weeks of his entire life. He saw that God had compassion on him and even for ignoring the writing in the sand for all of his 40 odd years of life.

Finally, looked in the eye with death. He saw a reason to look for the truth. The truth that he'd avoided for all those years.

He couldn't ignore the writing in the sand for him. You know what it said? It said this. I love you. I always have.

I always will. I have a place for you. And I've been longing for you to come to me for all this time. But you're here now. And you're forgiven.

You are loved. You are welcome. You are mine. It was so precious. Mark had a few short weeks before his deathbed.

[26 : 57] This woman was held in front of her deathbed but broke free from it. And not everyone gets that chance. We always come to Jesus when we get to the end of ourselves.

I implore you today to not get to the end of yourself just before your deathbed or at your deathbed. You may not get that chance.

I implore you today to come to the end of yourself today and find the compassionate heart of Jesus who's been writing in the sand for you all of your life.

We don't get to see what happens at the end of this woman's life. Having been given such a reprieve we would hope she gave up this life of misery.

Gave up that man started a new life a new beginning and I'm such a romantic. I see her walking away with the face aglow anticipation and excitement stones lighter.

[27 : 57] and I imagine the people who looked upon her pointing fingers the mister she deserves to be stoned the missus she deserves to be hauled in front of a crowd the miss I would never do that the me how could she fall that way?

I imagine all of them to be convinced of their own sin then realize that she needs a friend just as much as they do and they became her friend. This is in my mind by the way it's not in the Bible but it's in my mind and in my heart because I believe Jesus doesn't give us a new beginning and stop it there I think he builds on that with love and imagine those friends helping her to find her way in her new way of life.

You know Jesus says we must do the same it is our calling and our duty to show the fallen the compassion of Jesus Christ.

we are to be his compassionate heart. I hope this has touched your heart today I hope Jesus has spoken to your heart today and you see the writing in the sand for you today and that no matter who walks through this door or walks into your life you will show them Jesus' compassionate heart.

Let's pray. this prayer is taken from our daily bread on the 24th of September it says this all around us are needs and God bring them to our attention those needs can motivate us to put our compassion into action and those actions will encourage others as we show them the love of Christ as I see pain and need loving God soften my heart to act with Christ like compassion give me a compassionate heart give us a compassionate heart a love so strong that it leads us to take action to meet that need 2 John 1 6 says this and this is love that we walk in obedience to his command as you have heard from the beginning his command is that you walk in love amen