

THE POWER OF COMPASSION

*“Soon afterward Jesus went with His disciples to the village of Nain, and a large crowd followed Him. A funeral procession was coming out as He approached the village gate. The young man who had died was a widow’s only son, and a large crowd from the village was with her. When the Lord saw her, His heart **overflowed with compassion**. “Don’t cry!” He said. Then He walked over to the coffin and touched it, and the bearers stopped. “Young man,” He said, “I tell you, get up.” Then the dead boy sat up and began to talk! And Jesus gave him back to his mother.” (Luke 7:11-15)*

In this story, it would seem as if Jesus could not look upon grief, without that grief becoming His own. In the similar case of Lazarus, it was the bitter thought of a lost and departed friend which opened the fountain of the Lord’s own tears. At Bethany (as with here at Nain), it was simply the spectacle of human *suffering* that made its irresistible appeal to the emotional side of the Jesus’ nature. The anguish of human compassion moved the Rock of Ages, and streams of tenderness gushed forth. *“When Jesus saw Mary weeping, and the Jews weeping which came with her...**Jesus wept.**”* Likewise, when the Lord saw this poor widow who had lost her only son, *“He had **compassion** on her.”* Jesus had probably heard her bitter, heart-rending sobbing in the midst of the mourners, and this quickly drew His attention. So He uttered a soothing sympathetic *word* before He uttered the divine instruction that brought forth this astounding miracle - *“I command you young man to **get up!**”*

Notice how Jesus (who was God in the flesh) responded to Mary’s suffering with a human reaction - *tears*. Likewise, I would imagine that in this instance His eyes also filled up. This response reveals an exquisite and touching feature in Christ’s humanity. It attests to how intensely delicate and sensitive, as well as true, that humanity was. With a tear in His eye, and a suppressed sob, all He said to the widow was, *“Weep not.”* But with Mary at Bethany there was not even the one word; nothing but those significant and tender *tears*.

This forlorn widow had no lack of other sorrowing friends. Many went out to mingle their tears with hers; but the sympathy of all these could only go so far. They could not be expected to enter into the miraculous realm. Human sympathy is, at best, *imperfect*; sometimes *soulish* or *selfish*, but always *temporary*. Yet not so with the sympathy of Him who joined the funeral procession. He could say, as none else can, ***“I know your sorrows.”*** The condolence of the kindest friend on earth has a *limit* - that of Jesus Christ has none.

Who knows, but in that gentle utterance of tenderness, and in the deep **compassion** which dictated it, the Son of Man may have had in mind another *“Mother”* - whose hour of similar bereavement was now at hand; when His own death was to be the sword which was to pierce her soul. So be mindful of this, the *sympathizer at Nain* is still the same today! He *had* compassion then - He *has* compassion now! He who stopped the funeral casket on that summer’s night in the plains of Jezreel ever lives, and loves, and supports, and has **compassion**; and *will* continue to have compassion until compassion is no longer needed.

In this story, Jesus didn't even know who this widow was - He simply acted out of compassion because He was **filled** with it. Thomas Aquinas wrote, *"I would rather feel compassion than know the meaning of it."* Twenty-seven years ago, a famous basketball player Jim Rice climbed out of the dugout and into the stands to help get an injured boy the urgent medical care he needed. Rice's quick actions probably saved the 4-year-old boy's life.

"In times like that, you really see the quality of the character of the people involved," Tom Keane, the boy's father, said. *"Jim is a really humble guy. He doesn't want to take credit for doing anything out of the ordinary. He said he did anything anyone would have done. I think that's an understatement of what he did that day. He did something that nobody else did. He very likely have saved my son's life. I remember, I saw the ball hit the bat and heard the crack and thought it hit the side of the dugout. I turned, and there was my son with blood gushing out of his head. The next thing I remembered was Jim Rice picking him up. And I was kind of chasing him while he was carrying Jonathan. There was an ambulance waiting. When we got to the hospital they were set up for neurosurgery."*

Doctors relieved the pressure on Jonathan's brain and gave him medicine to guard against seizures. Tom Keane estimated that the whole thing, from the crack of the bat to his son laying on an operating table at Children's Hospital, took about 30 minutes. Jonathan was in the hospital for five days. When Jim Rice took the US Basketball "Hall of Fame's" traditional pre-induction tour, he said saving Keane might very well be his greatest accomplishment. Compassion achieved more ability!

The civil war chaplain and pastor E.M Bounds wrote (well over one hundred years ago) these words in the style of that time about **compassion**, *"Compassion has in it the quality of mercy, it is of the nature of pity, and moves the soul with tenderness of feeling for others. Compassion is moved at the sight of sin, sorrow and of suffering. It stands at the other extreme to indifference of spirit to the wants and woes of others, and is far removed from insensibility and hardness of heart, in the midst of want and trouble and wretchedness. Compassion stands beside sympathy for others, is interested in them, and is concerned about them. Compassion may not always move men, but is always moved toward men. Compassion may not always turn men to God, but it will, and does, turn God to man. And where it is most helpless to relieve the needs of others, it can at least break out into prayer to God for others. Compassion is never indifferent, selfish, and forgetful of others. Compassion has alone to do with others."*

Today compassion is definitely needed. It is a vital commodity, and we need as much of it as possible. What's more, we need the **supernatural power of God** that is released through compassion. *"And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and He healed their sick"* (Matthew 14:14). Compassion is a key to the miraculous. Compassion is love in action. The power of God is the power of Love. John 3:16, *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him would not perish but have everlasting life."* But also remember, 1 John 3:8, *"For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."*

Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil - **with the power of compassion**. He healed the sick - with the power of compassion. He cast out demons - with the power of compassion. He set the captives free - with the power of compassion. And that same **power** lives on the inside of you! Romans 5:5, *"For the love (compassion) of God was shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost - Who was given to you."* With that love/compassion, came the **power of God**. Next time you see someone in need, be open to be moved with compassion. Believe that because Jesus lives in you, that His love *and power* will flow through you and heal the sick; and together with Him you will destroy the works of the devil.

George Washington Carver said, *"How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving and tolerant of the weak and strong. Because someday in life you will have been all of these."*

Remember, with compassion you have the **power** to make a difference. Where ever you are and in whatever you are doing compassion is waiting to release God's power! Mark describes a desperate solitary leper coming to Jesus, begging Him on his knees, *'If you are willing, you can make me clean.'* **Moved with compassion**, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, *"I am willing. Be made clean!"* And immediately the leprosy left him.' (Mark 1:40-42). The man was not only healed of this dreaded disease; but in the process he was loved and affirmed as a valued member of the community. I believe that compassion must have been a key in Jesus' miraculous healings. And let's end with this thought.... Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever!