

WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO COMPASSION?

Luke 4:14-21

February 20, 2022

This morning I want to continue from last week as we have been learning how to experience a personal revival, as we have been challenged with this question: “*Do you dare to continue where you currently are, or do you want to go deeper with God?*” I wanted us to spend some more time here because I strongly believe that God doesn’t want any of us to become content where we currently are; thereby, becoming complacent and lose our passion to serve Christ and serve others sacrificially. God’s desire is for His followers is to be strong in the faith, to fall in love with His Word and spend quality time each-and-every day in communication with Him through prayer. So, God wants us to crave and chew on things that will continue to grow and mature our faith and keep stretching us and taking us out of our comfort zones, so we can go deeper in our faith and experience more of His blessings, more of His presence, and more of His power to boldly take the Gospel message out into our community, especially in these times when everything is being shaken!

Today, I want us to grasp the fact that when believers are filled with the breath of God (His Holy Spirit) and when their hearts are set on revival fire, they become the voice and presence of God wherever God has placed them. The Bible clearly tells us that if anyone is in Christ, they have been given a ministry to carry out, which is the ministry of reconciliation, which means helping to reconcile the lost back to God and speak into everything that is not operating according to God’s Kingdom principals. This calling upon our lives is according to **2 Corinthians 5:18-20**, “*All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation... (FOR A REASON) We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.*” Being Christ’s ambassadors means we are not silent when everything we believe in and put faith in are being trampled upon and stomped on; instead, we speak the truth as God’s mouthpiece; His representatives wherever He has placed us, so that our words spread revival to everyone we encounter. People should notice the fire of God burning within us, because we take revival with us wherever we go, and breathe out that breath of God to others. So, the atmosphere should shift or change whenever we walk into a room, because the Spirit of God enters with us. We are His voice, and we are His hands and His feet in this world, reconciling the world

back to God. We are atmosphere-changers, a light in the darkness, catching everything around us on revival fire for the LORD as we live our lives full-out for Christ, bringing Christ into every situation we face, that God's will would be done on earth as it is in Heaven!

We see the fullness of this divine calling in the life of Jesus in the time He spent on this earth. Seven hundred years before Jesus was born the prophet Isaiah said this about the ministry of Jesus: ***“Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations”*** (Isaiah 42:1). And then, at the age of thirty, Jesus began His public ministry after He was baptized in the Jordan River by His cousin John the Baptist. At Jesus' baptism every member of the Trinity was involved – God spoke and confirms Jesus as His Son, and the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, descends and rest upon Jesus in bodily form like a dove. **Mark 1:10-11, “Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descended on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: ‘You are my Son, whom I love, with you I am well pleased.’”** Jesus embodied the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Ghost!

Mark's Gospel tells us that the Baptism of Jesus was a violent act – the Heavens were torn open – a sign to Satan and his demonic realm that God is now declaring war on his occupation of this earth and the holding of His people as hostages. And this violent act was also an answer to prophet Isaiah's prayer, ***“Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you! As when fire sets twigs ablaze and causes water to boil, come down to make your name known to your enemies and cause the nations to quake before you”*** (Isaiah 64:1-2). That day the spiritual realm was put on notice that something very significant is about to take place, and Satan was put of full alert, wondering what God was up to by coming down into his domain that was given to him by the very first humans created, Adam and Eve. So, Satan goes on the offensive and attacks his adversary. I believe that's why, immediately after His baptism, Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil for 40 days, demonstrating to Satan that he has met his match and his reign on this earth is about to fall. His authority over God's creation is about to be snatched away and given back to mankind!

When the devil had finished all of his tempting, the devil left utterly defeated, and then Jesus returns to the region of Galilee in the power of the Spirit, where Jesus

steps into the synagogue located in His hometown of Nazareth to announce to the world God's strategy in taking back His good creation. Jesus is handed the scroll of the prophet Isaiah to read, and after Jesus read what was predicted about Him 700 years earlier by the prophet Isaiah, He declared to the people, ***"Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing"*** (Luke 4:21). God put His powerful breath into His Son, which made Jesus capable of restoring everything back to God by bringing healing, deliverance, revival, and abundant life to everyone He encountered. Then, when Jesus left this earth to sit at the right hand of His Father in heaven, God sent the same powerful breath upon His followers to do what Jesus did, as He commissioned His followers to take His breath to the ends of the earth, making disciples of all nations. So, as believers the baton has been passed on to us to carry on what Jesus began. We have been given the power and the authority to live in a constant state of revival, since Christ dwells within us and empowers us. However, we have to make the choice to step into that anointing with boldness and confidence!

To live that victorious life empowered by the Holy Spirit – we must know, claim, and then step into our true identity in Christ, because Satan's desire is to give us a false identity by trying to convince us that we are not worthy of our calling, trying to convince us that we don't measure up to God's high standards and don't have what it takes to overcome him and this world. That is why it is so crucially important that we never stop meeting together. That we continue coming together here on a regular basis to encourage one another, and speak life and truth into one another's lives, so we don't start believing and living according to what the enemy keeps trying to tell us. Satan has tried to stop us with COVID, but he has failed! The church will come back stronger than ever! We are here not only to worship, but here to speak life into one another, so that our hearts are prepared to expect a miracle every time we meet. As believers we carry the same authority with us that Jesus carried as He walked this earth, so all we need to do is to look to the life of Jesus to overcome this world, and step into our calling and purpose as His representatives (ambassadors).

I felt called to preach this message, because as your pastor, my desire is to see the church walk in the power of the Holy Spirit – seeing the lost coming to Christ, seeing the sick healed and demons flee. I am tired of this dark cloud of doom and gloom, and despair that has hung over the church for quite a while now, as we continue to see congregations struggling to keep their doors open as their numbers decline. I am desperate to see revival take place, where believers will take risks

and go beyond their comfort zones as they passionately pursue their Saviour. I am desperate to see the forces of darkness tremble whenever a believer walks into a room where there is unbelief, despair, sickness, addiction, demonic oppression, marriage, and family issues. For far too long Satan has been feasting on Christians by tormenting their lives, their families, their communities, their nation and causing disunity and division within their churches. It's about time we took our stand against our enemy Satan and take back what he has stolen.

When Jesus and the early disciples walked this earth – power and strength flowed through them, and we need to believe that same power and strength it is still flowing through His followers today. The Greek word for power is “*dunamis*,” which is the root word for the word “*dynamite*.” Dynamite is explosive power, under control, to bring beneficial results in removing unwanted obstacles out of the way. Dynamite when used under controlled conditions is highly affective in bringing about desired results without causing unwanted destruction. In the same way, spiritual power, like dynamite, is explosive once the fuse is lit, and will remove unwanted obstacles out of the way so God can move. We just need to place the dynamite exactly where God wants reconciliation and change to take place and then lite the fuse and watch God work! However, it's a choice – we must purposely make room in our heart to host His breathe, the presence of God. In his letter to the church in Galatia the apostle Paul declared, “***I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me***” (Galatians 2:20). If we are serious about making room in our heart for God, then this verse should be our daily prayer, calling us to live for Christ and not for ourselves, because Christ gave Himself for us, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, of reconciling everything back to God.

On the cross Jesus switched places with us to make us His body on the earth; therefore, we must let Him live within us, in which there are no limitations placed on God's power in anyway. So, we can say along with Jesus, on that day when He read from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah in His hometown of Nazareth, “***The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour*** (Luke 4:18-19). We are Christ to those who are lost, hurt and wandering hopelessly in a state of despair, as we walk in the power and authority that comes from the living Christ residing within us. So, if Christ truly is in us and

we are in Him, as He is in the Father, then there is no limit to what we can see take place on this earth, once we step into our calling as His ambassadors, having the ministry of reconciling everything back to God!

Here's my message for today! To be Christ's ambassadors we need compassion! The Gospels tell us that Jesus was moved with compassion for the people He encountered. For example, **Matthew 14:13-14** records an incident that took place after the death of Jesus' cousin, John the Baptist. When Jesus received the news, He tried to get away by boat for some solitude, most likely to grieve, but the relentless crowds continued to follow Him, ***"When Jesus landed he had a huge crowd waiting for him. Seeing so many people, his heart was deeply moved with compassion for them, so he healed all the sick who were in the crowd."*** How often are you moved with compassion like Jesus was? How aware are you about the needs around you? As I take in what has been happening these past few weeks with this freedom convoys and border closings, I keep wondering, *"What has happened to compassion?"* And more specifically, *"What has happened to my compassion?"* That I can so easily get caught up with what is happening, and pick sides, and let my emotions get the best of me. In that way I'm not very Christ-like in my words and my actions! As a follower of Christ, if compassion was part of the character of Jesus, then compassion must be part of my character. Jesus is the manifestation of God, fully God and fully man, full of compassion, and likewise, I am the manifestation of Christ, an ambassador (representative) of Christ, full of compassion!

We often hear believers say, "I want more of Jesus!" But what does it mean to want more of Jesus? It always starts with hunger – spiritual hunger, and you're not really hungry for Jesus until you're not satisfied with the way you react to, speak to, and interact with those around you, especially when dealing with highly controversial situations where tensions are running high. Hunger for God always springs from need. Those that came to Jesus for miracles were in desperate need and Jesus responded to their needs – always with compassion. **Matthew 14:4** tells us that Jesus healed those in the crowd out of compassion. Likewise, the world needs compassion today like never before from us as believers, all because compassion is the true mark of Christian character. From Exodus through the Psalms and the prophets and into the Gospels and the Epistles, Scripture tells us again-and-again that compassion is the mark of the life of the believer. So, how hungry are you to bear the mark of Jesus – the compassion of Jesus in your life?

Looking at **2 Corinthians 5:18-20** once again, Paul reminds us that when we became a Christ follower, the old life had gone and the new life has come, and it's all by God's grace, *"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation... (FOR A REASON) We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us."* And then Paul continues on in **2 Corinthians 6:1-2**, *"As God's co-workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. For he says, 'In the time of my favour I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.' I tell you, now is the time of God's favour, now is the day of salvation."* Paul reminds us that at one time we were lost like the rest of the world around us, and then one day God reached down and broke in and changed everything, so that you could encounter His presence in a real and tangible way. And then, because of His grace, God continues to show up, day-after-day, so that you can live in His presence as a lifestyle. And when you live in His presence as a lifestyle, God takes you little bitty heart and breaks it wide open – giving us a new heart – and then you find yourself living in radical compassion. And then, with this radical compassion, as we learn to live in His presence everything changes! We are a new creation! The old has gone, the new has come!

Roland and Heidi Baker have served as missionaries for more than forty years to the world's poorest people, and have lived and ministered for the last twenty-five years in Mozambique. This is what they wrote about living in God's presence:

"Do you want to say yes to living in His Presence, to living in the glory? To living in the favour where compassion rules your heart and miracles are commonplace? I'm not suggesting some one-time, 'Oh, let's have a miracle rally, a miracle crusade! It will be great!' NO. I'm challenging us to take up a lifestyle of desperation – being desperate for Jesus 24/7. The world is desperate! They're desperate for us – for you – to carry the glory of God to them. People are desperate for you to carry the power of Almighty God to them. When you step out in faith and touch others – everyone you come in contact with – with the love of God – you are living in His presence. You're not afraid. You're living lean. You're living holy. You're living pure. You're in season, out of season, ready any time. You know Daddy's got your back, and Daddy knows your name. And when He calls, you come. He's a good Daddy, and every day He will call your name."

(Living from the Presence Interactive Manual, page 78)

When God puts His Spirit in you and you live in His Presence and compassion rules your heart, then everyone will recognize it. When others see that you are sold out, radical, and wrecked for Jesus, they will want what you have. But how do we live this way everyday when we are these jars of clay, weak, imperfect, and flawed in many ways. Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, says that although we live here in our earthly bodies, the Lord's breathe, His spiritual Presence is with us daily as we live by faith, and it's only in His strength that we can do what He calls us to do. We are God's treasures in jars of clay, these cracked flawed clay pots, showing His all-surpassing power according to **2 Corinthians 4:8-12**, "***We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.***" We did to ourselves daily, so we can live for others!

Living from His Presence means that God is going to use you for the purpose you were given before you were born. And the key is to be useable, and if God is not using you yet, maybe He still needs to work on you to make you useable. To become useable, we need to be **FAT** Christians – faithful, available, and teachable, and part of being useable is having compassion for others! Being useable means carrying His Presence into our homes, into our schools and workplaces, into the grocery stores, and the streets of our community, showing compassion wherever we go.

That's why revival must begin within us first! There must be a personal awakening to who we are in Christ to make it all happen. Revival will only happen once we open our hearts and lay down our ambitions by putting self aside, dying to self and allow the breath of God to blow on His people once again like dry bones in the middle of a dry valley. I believe God is once again crying out to His church as He did to His people, Israel, while they were living in exile during the time of the prophet Ezekiel. You may recall the chapter in the Old Testament book of Ezekiel when God brought him to a valley full of lifeless dry bones, and God asked Ezekiel this question, "***Son of man, can these bones live?***" (Ezekiel 37:3). His reply was that only you God knows the answer to that question. So, God tells Ezekiel to prophesy (speak) to the dry bones the words of the LORD, and they will come to life. Ezekiel did as God commanded him, and the bones came together,

and then tendons, flesh and skin appeared and covered the bones, but they were still lifeless, until the breath of God entered them, and then they came to life and stood up on their feet – a vast army. This was a sign to God’s people, the Israelites, living in exile, discouraged, while living in Babylon, far from home. A sign giving them hope that one day God will bring them back to the land of Israel, and fill them with His life giving breathe, the Holy Spirit. God is now putting His life giving breathe in the dry bones of His church, bringing revival, breathing into us the compassion to see God’s Kingdom on this earth as it is in Heaven!

We need to also be aware of the detriments to compassion, such as unforgiveness, bitterness and taking offense. Taking offense is one of the areas within the church that is preventing revival, an area that we don’t often think about! The religious legalistic Pharisees took offence when Jesus hung out and ate with the worst of sinners, and also when Jesus broke their 660 laws, especially healing on the Sabbath. **Mark 2:16, “When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: ‘Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?’”** The legalistic Pharisees didn’t care about the lost, or the sick, or the demon possessed, they were not moved with compassion, not seeing the great need around them, and that’s why Jesus said that their father was Satan, not God. Guard your heart against taking offense!

Jesus will not only judge us for our lack of compassion, but will also judge cities and nations for their lack of compassion: **Matthew 11:20-24, “Jesus began to denounce the towns in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. ‘Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. And you Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No you will go down to Hades. For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.’”** Jesus spoke these words of judgment to these 3 Jewish cities that witnessed His mighty works, but didn’t show compassion, so Jesus tells them that they would be judged more severely than those notoriously wicked heathen cities of the Old Testament – Tyre, Sidon and Sodom. These wicked cities could have been spared if there would have been faithful followers of God who had compassion for that wicked city and presented the Gospel to them, but they didn’t. Today, God is still looking for those He can

send into our wicked cities, and our wicked nation to bring revival so that His judgment will not come against them. God will judge Canada if believers don't step up to bring revival to our leaders, bringing about change so that we become a God fearing nation once again!

During this time of COVID, lockdowns and mandates, people are easily offended, and when we are offended that will deter us from showing compassion and reaching out to others who need Jesus to touch their lives. So, the world is not looking for a space heater with which to warm their extremities – rather the world is looking for a bonfire that warms them completely, right to their inner soul and being. So, we must be God's embers that start the fire of revival around us, as God has called us to burn brightly for Him right where He has planted us. John Wesley once said, *"Catch on fire and others will love to come and watch you burn."*

If you long to burn for God with radical compassion, this means that whenever we meet God at our altar, we must first allow His fire to burn up everything within us that is not Christ-like, like a refiner's fire burns up the dross in producing pure gold and silver. And if we don't have the same compassion as Jesus' had when He walked this earth, then we are building on the wrong foundation, our fire has gone out and needs to be rekindled. As Paul tells us in **1 Corinthians 3:11-13**, ***"For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work."*** God wants pure gold and silver from His people and this purification usually comes through testing, through the fire of trouble, suffering and persecution to refine us, getting rid of anything that is not Christ-like, especially a cold hard heart that has no compassion, and help us to build our lives on the right foundation which is Christ Jesus!

In closing – whatever God calls us to do, it must be motivated by love, love for God and love for one another. I am preaching this message to you because I am motivated by love, wanting everyone to walk in the fullness of Christ and live to their full potential and calling with compassionate hearts. May we always be known as those who walked in love, as Jesus told us, ***"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another"*** (John 13:34-35).

As His church let us make it our mission to keep one hand on the cross and the other snatching the lost from the fire so the church will never lose its calling and slide into oblivion. Let us keep pursuing the lost with compassion, never giving up on the least of these, because love motivates us! Let us never stop praying for the sick and those dealing with all types of hardships, because God has called us for such a time as this and it's time for us to burn with compassion and revival fire, and step into our calling as passionate followers of Christ who are filled with His presence, living our lives as Christ did when He walked this earth – with compassion!