

Mark 6:30-44, John 6:1-15

A Christian with compassion

At a theater in Athens, there was a play commemorating National Day. An Athenian old man arrived at the theater a little late. It was filled with both Athenians and Spartans and there was no place to sit. The Athenians who saw the old man standing around said, "Give the old man a seat." However, there was no one who gave up their seats even whilst saying such a thing.

The old man slowly approached the Spartans' seat. The foreigners rose from their seats and gave up their seats. Everyone who saw this scene applauded. The old man said. "The Athenians know what goodness is. However, the Spartans are those who immediately practice their goodness in action.

Our God is a great God, our God is a merciful and gracious God, our God is the Lord of lords, God is our savior, God is loving and faithful, God is wisdom of wisdom... Apostle John said, "Jesus did many things. If every one of them was written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written."

Why do we believe in God, why do we praise God like that?

Not because of God's words, but because of his action.

God made us so we call him Creator, God saved us so we call him the Savior, God leads and guides and protects us so we call him the shepherd. Without action, he couldn't be our savior. His words and actions match up, so he affirmed He is our God.

In today's passage, we found out that Jesus had compassion on those who followed him. He didn't stay at such an emotion. With compassion, he acted the way the Spartans did to the old man. That's why Jesus Christ became our Lord and savior. We call him loving Jesus because he acted with his love.

As Christians, if we only stick to words or emotions like the Athenians, we can't be Christians. Bible study, pray times, many gatherings are important. Those things can't be excluded in Christian life. However, it is not enough. We can become dynamic and living Christians, only when we act according to our words and faith.

I hope through this message all of us live as Christians with Jesus' compassion.

Then how can we practice compassion the way Jesus did?

Through this story, I would like to share two points about the way we should practice.

The first point in which we can practice compassion is "welcoming".

Have you ever turned up somewhere unexpected and been pleasantly surprised by the welcoming reception you received? Or have you timidly voiced your opinion on something and been encouraged by the responses of those around you?

When Jesus saw a large crowd come to him, He welcomed them all. There was neither Jew nor foreigner, neither white nor black, nor male and female, nor rich and poor, nor righteous and sinner, for they were all one in Jesus Christ's welcoming. Because he had compassion on them, He accepted people. He had compassion so he acted. "welcoming"

As those who experienced Jesus' welcoming, many of us would like to think that we have a friendly face and approachable heart and open arms. Sometimes we could welcome even strangers.

But when it comes to everyday interactions, a lot of us fail to cultivate such qualities. We can easily get so caught up in rushing around to achieve our daily goals that we scarcely extend a welcome to those around us. In another point, we would look on our imperfection and often criticize each other as a judge and make a wall among us.

We need to remember that without knowing Jesus, without knowing his welcome, even if we try hard to welcome, we cannot help but fail all the time. Sometimes we can't even accept our own family.

But, Jesus welcomed all sorts of people in all kinds of settings. He always had the time for those who needed His help. That's why we are called and welcomed here freely and unconditionally. Only when we understand how Jesus welcomed us, it will be possible for us to follow him.

Then what can we do with the compassion Jesus had on us? It is not too difficult.

Sometimes, all it takes for us to extend a warm reception is a few seconds of our time to ask the person serving us about their day or a few minutes to listen to a friend who needs to let off some steam. Please look around you. Can you say, "welcome"?

The second point in which we can practice compassion is through "generosity"
Can we say this together? "generosity".

Welcoming other people into our lives is great, but we need to go further as Jesus' followers with compassion.

Jesus saw a large crowd come to him and he had compassion for them so he welcomed them and taught them. It was late in the day, so the disciples said to Jesus, "Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." They knew the people were starving to death. Jesus knew if then, they would die on the road and he ordered, "You give them something to eat."

Jesus welcomed the people and he looked after them as well. Jesus not only called and saved us but he will lead, guide and protect us from the world until we go to heaven as well. Praise God!!!

Throughout its pages, the Bible makes it clear that we are called to give generously. In the New Testament, God himself gave us His only Son because He loved us so much. God gave the most precious to us and for us.

In John's Gospel, before Jesus asked the disciples to feed the crowd, he already had in mind what he was going to do, which was feeding them. Jesus only wanted them to join His miracle.

Like his disciples, before we try to obey God's word, many of us consider a possibility and focus on our capability and conditions more. And we decide if we can obey or not. But we need to know that raising the dead, transforming sinful into righteous, healing the sick, encouraging the desperate or feeding five thousand with five bread and two fish, all of these things are not our role, It is Jesus's role. Making miracle is His role.

Our role is just to obey. Our role is not to care whether we can do or not. Our role is to care if we should do or not.

Then what should we do?

Give generously with compassion like Jesus did. The starting point of feeding 5 000 men was not giving a million dollars but a child's "smallness." Can you spend your small time or talent for other people who need you? Can you give small portions of your possession to the needy whom God loves with compassion? Who knows whether the miracle Jesus created with small barley loaves and small fish will reoccur in our lives?

I remind you of the old man's saying I mentioned in the beginning story. "The Athenians know what goodness is. However, the Spartans are those who immediately practice their goodness in action. I want to change it to something like this, "Many people know what goodness is. However, Christians are those who immediately practice their goodness in action with compassion."

We have another lockdown.

God may bless you so that during this period, Jesus compassion passes on you and it through you spreads to your family, neighbors and community. Amen.