

Go ahead and open up your Bibles to Matthew. While you're doing that...when Pastor Jack asked me last week what I would be teaching on, Pastor Doug was in my office as well, and I told them both that I would be teaching on compassion. Once their laughter died down enough (Laughing) to hear me, I had to explain to them that I like teaching on things that I am not good at. That can either be a good thing or a bad thing for you all when I fill in, but it is what it is.

But as you can gather from their response of laughter, I didn't need to be convinced that compassion is an area that is lacking in my life. That's not to say that I never show compassion; that's simply not true. And I'm my own worst critic, and so I know. But, I mean, I am capable of it. But compassion is clearly not an attribute that is ascribed to me. Now I can blame a lot of things on why I'm not compassionate or at least labeled that. I can say it's genetic because my dad is truly no different than me. (Laughing) Sorry, Dad. He's right back there (Pastor Jason says under his breath) (Laughing) I can say I wasn't hugged enough as a kid. But as far as I can remember, honestly, I never liked to be hugged; it was uncomfortable to me. Another big one for me is selfishness. I'm incredibly selfish with my time. All these certainly play a role in why I am the way I am.

But you know what I really think it is, why I really struggle with being a compassionate person - and this took me many years to kind of reveal itself in my life, it took me having a wife, a child, a new hairstyle (Laughing) - hard-life situations in order for these truths to be revealed about me, and that is this - I am afraid of being hurt, feeling pain at an emotional level in regards to being rejected by others or disliked when my true self is revealed or exposed. It makes you very vulnerable. There are a lot of painful experiences we face in life, especially in our younger years of growing up, of facing rejection and not living up to other people's expectations or being made fun of. And we have to learn to process all this pain that comes our way and, sadly, most of us don't know how to process this pain in healthy ways. We're not shown how to go to Jesus, how to find our worth and identity in Him. So for me, over the course of years - without me even knowing it was taking place, my mind took all this painful information and built a defense force to protect my heart from pain, to protect me from feeling not good enough, from being rejected, from being disliked.

So, in the process of building this natural defense force, it trained me on how to process my emotions which was this: don't show any. Showing emotion is weakness. You want to be strong, you want to be smart and not controlled by others, you shut down those emotions because emotions reveal your vulnerability. And vulnerability opens the door for pain. And my mind is skillfully trained in avoiding pain. Therefore I work really hard to do everything myself, which then leads me to be extremely critical of others who do not do the same. And I have little empathy for able-bodied people who, at least from my perception, are fully capable of taking care of themselves and their own needs, yet they express need and help from others. However, the minute I see a handicapped person struggling or a helpless animal or stories of abortion, my heart wrenches with emotion, and I'm reminded that I am indeed a human. But I don't like the way it feels; I feel vulnerable. So I shut it down, and I put it out of my mind because that's how I've conditioned myself to respond.

But here's the real truth - that defense mechanism instilled in me only reveals that I am still broken. Those insecurities are still very much present within me; they're just masked by my arrogance and my pride. And the more I learn and study God's Word, the more I push into knowing my Savior, the more I see the world around me and people in it, the more I realize how broken we all are. The people that look like they have it all together and the people that very much don't, we're all so very different as individuals - different problems, different sins, different social statuses - but at the same time, while being oh so very different, we are all so very the same.

So with your Bibles, turn to chapter 8, Matthew 8. And I know everything says - the bulletin and this little slide behind me (on the screen) - we're only covering chapter 9, but I made a later decision to include chapter 8 as well to do a better job at painting the picture that I believe Matthew would have wanted me to paint.

So, with that said, we're not going to be looking at these chapters in depth, which means there's a lot of rich material that you're going to find in these two chapters that you should dive into for yourselves in your own study. But my goal is to go through these stories that Matthew shares here with the intent to emphasize one of the major themes running through these two chapters (which I believe then climaxes at the end of chapter 9), and that major theme is this: the condition of man and God's response to it. When I say the condition of man, I mean the entire man or woman's spiritual and physical state, the seen and the unseen, heart, soul,

mind and body. When you read these couple of chapters, and we will, you'll see Matthew's emphasis on the physical condition. We see people with leprosy, paralysis, a lady with a fever, disciples who are scared to death, roid-raging demoniacs, a quadriplegic, a lady hemorrhaging, a dead girl, a blind man, and a mute man who is demon-possessed. It is honestly where Telenovela writers get their inspiration.

Now I do want to let you know that not all of these events that we're going to read are chronological. Some are but not all of them. Matthew, in the entirety of his gospel, didn't write chronologically, but he structured his writing topically. Now the overarching theme of the gospel of Matthew is Jesus' Kingship, that He was the promised Messiah prophesied of old. If you read through the book of Matthew, you're going to find lots of Old Testament references of Jesus fulfilling them. And so he groups his narratives into topics that emphasize His Kingship in one way or another and, in chapters 8 and 9, he speaks to Jesus' Kingship by pointing to His power. But His power isn't displayed by conquering armies or removing other earthly kings off their thrones or raining down brimstone and fire from heaven; Jesus' power is displayed through miracles of healing broken people. And what we learn about Jesus in these chapters is that He's not condemning to the broken, He's not ashamed of being seen with the broken, and He's not taking advantage of the broken. Rather, we see Jesus embrace the broken, the hurting, the outcast, the sinner, the undeserving. What we see is a God who cares, a God whose compassion speaks louder than His words. Nothing communicates love more than action. I read a quote that says this, "Compassion can't be measured in dollars and cents. It does come with a price tag, but that price tag isn't the amount of money spent. The price tag is love." Jesus is moved by love as He sees broken people everywhere He goes. And what we learn in these two chapters is that our outward ailments, our physical handicaps or disabilities, speak to a greater brokenness - a brokenness of the soul that many, sadly, are not even aware of. The brokenness within my own self that masks my insecurities with arrogance, thereby making me unapproachable by other people. The brokenness in others who try to find love in all the wrong places, hoping to fill a void that only Jesus can fill. A brokenness in which some who search for happiness only to find and run into the wall of hopelessness at every turn. And that brokenness that touches every living being in one way or another - whether they're aware of it or not - when met by the compassionate love of God, they can find healing.

So, Matthew records ten miracles in these two chapters, and they are broken up into three groups with an event relating to discipleship separating each of the groups. And I call them commercials because that's kind of what they are. Now I must give credit where credit is due because, as I studied for this, I thought Warren Wiersbe (he's a commentator) just nailed it when he categorized these groups. And so I couldn't do a better job, so I present you with his insightful groupings. And so the first grouping of folks is titled "grace to the outcast;" and the second grouping of miracles is called "peace to the disturbed;" and the last group is "restoration for the broken."

So let's go ahead and dive into the first group. But remember we aren't looking at them in-depth; we're simply looking at the condition of man and God's response to it. So, starting in chapter 8, we have three encounters whereby Jesus heals three different types of social outcasts in Jewish culture: the first being a leper, the second a Gentile (which is a non-Jew), and the third a woman. Each of these categories of people were not categories that you wanted to belong to if you had a choice in Jewish culture. However, it tells us that Jesus shows special compassion towards those for whom society has great disdain.

So, starting in verse 1, I'm going to read to the end of verse 4. It says, "When He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. And behold, a leper came and worshipped Him, saying, 'Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.' Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, 'I am willing; be cleansed.' Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus said to him, 'See that you tell no one; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.' " Matthew starts with the healing of a leper, and I think this was intentional because there is a great spiritual significance to leprosy. Leprosy was a nasty disease in the ancient world. Even today, now known as Hansen's disease, it has no cure, but there is medication that can keep it at bay. So that's why we don't really hear much about it today. But back in biblical times, this was the nastiest disease of them all. Without getting into too much detail, leprosy was extremely contagious and would begin killing you from the inside out, forming spongy, tumor-like swellings on the face and the body. It was nasty. And according to Numbers 5:2, those with leprosy were not allowed to live in the community, with their fellow Israelites, because of how contagious they were; and lepers were to cover their mouths and yell out, "Unclean! Unclean!" (Leviticus 13:45) to warn others to remain far from them as to not spread the disease. It was actually recorded by an ancient rabbi that when he saw lepers for

himself, he would throw stones at them lest they come near him. What we find is leprosy is a graphic illustration for sin. Like leprosy, sin infects the whole person, and it's ugly, loathsome, corrupting, contaminating, alienating and incurable by man. So, lepers serve as a vivid object lesson of sin. And here, in verse 2, we see a leper come and worship Jesus, asking that if Jesus be willing, He can make this leper clean. So get this. This man was ordered by law to cry out, "Unclean! Unclean!" as to not infect others. Yet he approaches Jesus with confidence, with reverence and without hesitation. You want to know why? Because he realized that Jesus was not afraid of him or ashamed of him. And we see Jesus put out His hand and touch him. And it's so easy to miss the little details that speak volumes when we pay attention to them. Jesus reached out and touched a man that was, by definition, disgusting. Can you imagine the longing of this man's heart to be touched by anyone other than a leper? To be seen as clean and enjoy living back in community with the other Israelites? Well, Jesus took this man's defilement and gave him health. It's exactly what Jesus did on the cross as He took our sins and gave us His righteousness in return. The heart of Jesus is one that reaches out and touches the untouchable.

And then we move on to the healing of the centurion's servant. The centurion soldier was a *Gentile*, a non-Jew, who served as a Roman officer (typically over a hundred men). And this miracle of healing is less about the servant who got healed and more about the centurion officer who came to seek Jesus' help on behalf of his servant. The faith and humility of this Roman officer was one that impressed Jesus, so much so that Jesus revealed a truth about the kingdom of heaven to him. And we're going to read verses 8 down to 11. It says, "The centurion answered and said, 'Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, "Go," and he goes; and to another, "Come," and he comes; and to my servant, "Do this," and he does it.' When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.' " Jesus tells the centurion that he, too, gets to sit at the table with God's chosen people - a man who clearly knew his position in life, a man respected, in a position of authority but also a man that was not of Jewish descent, and clearly not of God's chosen people. But here, right from the lips of Jesus, that he is welcome to sit at the table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. So many people live in this broken world by circumstances that are

absolutely outside of their own control, born into poverty or social classes that they simply cannot change. But Jesus comes to say, "You are welcome at the table." Every background, every race, every color, tribe, nation. It doesn't matter with Jesus. He will dine with you if you receive Him in faith.

We then move on to the next miracle, which is Peter's mother-in-law. And I know mothers-in-law get a bad rap, but I personally like mine. But that's beside the point. Verses 14-15 say, "Now when Jesus had come into Peter's house, He saw his wife's mother lying sick with a fever. So He touched her hand, and the fever left her. And she arose and served them." As we continue to look at outcasts, add gender to the list that I just mentioned a little bit ago. I don't have to convince you that women throughout history were not highly esteemed in most cultures. We even see today in other parts of the world where being a woman or having a baby girl is undesirable. Surely it is a result of the wickedness of humanity, the wickedness that Jesus Himself bore the penalty of on the cross. But we see Jesus, in verse 15, gently touch Peter's mother-in-law. He touches her hand, and in that instant, the fever is relieved, and you would swear she's Italian the way she jumps up and starts serving them food. (Laughing) Jewish leaders in that time wouldn't have paid any attention to this woman. Jesus did.

We find, in verses 16 and 17, that He healed many more. It says, "When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: 'He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.'" We read, in verses 16 and 17, that the same evening everyone came knocking on the door who needed healing, and Jesus healed every single one of them. And we see the prophecy fulfilled that He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sickness. Jesus, humbling Himself, becoming a man, participated in the human pain and sorrow. He felt the pain of the destructive power of sin, which is the direct cause to our infirmities and sickness in the first place. Also, His victory on the cross assures us of the complete removal of this corruption, of the sickness when we are joined with Him in heaven.

And now we arrive to our first commercial break. Do you remember NBC's short little videos that were kind of informative to health or education - they played during a commercial break - and it was this real brief video that you see a shooting star, and it says, "The more you know....."? (Pastor Jason sings) Remember that? Some of you do. (Laughing) Well, they stole that from Matthew because that's

exactly what this is - a brief teaching lesson that breaks up the narrative. And so we're going to read verses 18 through 22, and it says, "And when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave a command to depart to the other side. Then a certain scribe came and said to Him, 'Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.' And Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.' Then another of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, let me first go and bury my father.' But Jesus said to him, 'Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead.' " Very quickly, Jesus addresses a zealous scribe who says, "I will follow You wherever You go." And Jesus replies with the reality of this commitment this man is making. And He's not questioning the genuineness of this man's commitment; rather He's just pointing to him the reality that to be a follower of Christ, it's not all glitz and glam. You don't get to party at the penthouse every night. "Following Me is going to cost you." Because a life with Jesus is not a self-indulgent life. It's a sacrificial life despite the miraculous healings and the signs and wonders and the joys that come with that. So, count the cost. Because even the foxes and the birds have more of a claim on the property here than Jesus claims.

The next guy, in verse 22, expresses a desire to follow Jesus, but he seems to have a reasonable request that he wants to bury his father. He says, "I just want to wait to bury my father." At face value, Jesus kind of looks like a jerk in His response to this man. But what we learn from studying is that the expression "bury your father" isn't implying that his father has just passed, and he needs to bury him; the disciple's request is to continue his duties as a son and wait until his father dies, whenever that might be, so he won't miss out on his inheritance. Jesus' reply, seemingly cold, is saying, "You've got your priorities mixed up; the spiritual is more important than the physical," meaning following Jesus means prioritize the preaching of the gospel in your life over all your other earthly responsibilities. Let the dead bury the dead. A true follower of Jesus must count the cost of following Him because it is a radically different lifestyle.

Now we move on to the next group of miracles - peace to the disturbed. All three of these miracles point to Jesus having the power to restore peace, the first being Jesus calming the storm. And we read verses 23 through 27, "Now when He" (Jesus) "got into a boat, His disciples followed Him. And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep. Then His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, 'Lord, save us! We are perishing!' But He said to them, 'Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?' Then

He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. So the men marveled, saying, 'Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?' " Fear and worry are a form a brokenness within us. And here, that fear is brought to the surface in this short little story. When they got into the boat, Jesus knew that that storm was coming, and He could have stopped it; before it even happened, He could have stopped it. But He chose not to. The storm they experienced was 100% purposeful. And what that storm revealed in the disciples is the same brokenness we feel when a storm appears to be catastrophic in our own lives. And so the disciples were terrified of this raging sea, and I'm sure it was pretty hairy. Yet you see Jesus sleeping comfortably. Their response: panic. They wake Him up. "Dude! Save us! We're perishing!" Now, having witnessed probably hundreds if not thousands of healings, and Jesus doing miraculous things, they charge Jesus with not caring about them and their physical condition or their state at this moment. How often do we find ourselves feeling like God is sleeping on the job when the trials of life stir up our fears and we begin to panic? Jesus reminds His disciples that He always cares - calling out their little faith and rebuking the winds and the sea. And you probably saw the Sea of Galilee come to this amazing, great calm where the water reflects the scenery around it, and the water becomes perfectly still. All at the voice of Jesus. And Jesus, in a second - in just a (Pastor Jason snaps his fingers) second, provides peace for their souls as they marvel at His great, remarkable power.

Now Jesus moves on to heal two demon-possessed men. Let's read verses 28 through 34, "When He had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two demon-possessed men, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way. And suddenly they cried out, saying, 'What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?' Now a good way off from them there was a herd of many swine feeding. So the demons begged Him, saying, 'If You cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine.' And He said to them, 'Go.' So when they had come out, they went into the herd of swine. And suddenly the whole herd of swine ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and perished in the water. Then those who kept them fled; and they went away into the city and told everything, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men. And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus. And when they saw Him, they begged Him to depart from their region." Now I could teach a whole sermon on this story alone because it's jam-packed with information. But I'm not because I want to stay on point with where we're heading. In this story, we see two very demon-possessed

men. There are more details about them in other gospel accounts, but we're going to stick to what we find in Matthew. We find that they're under the control of many demons, that they were "exceedingly fierce" - very strong, and no one could come near them. That's at least what we see from the description here. What Jesus sees is two men who are living in absolute bondage beyond their control to do anything about it. Those that are demon-possessed - that we find in Scripture - give us a detailed picture of what our bondage to sin looks like, how Satan robs us of life as he tightens the shackles, leaving us helpless to meet our own spiritual needs, and sometimes even to the point of not being able to even meet our physical needs. To be overcome by a power within you that you can't control is absolutely debilitating. To become a slave to the very thing that is destroying you, this is what sin is. We see it in drugs. We see it in alcohol and porn and anger and bitterness and countless other things that bind us from experiencing joy, experiencing any freedom and experiencing any peace. But Jesus does not fear these demoniacs; He pities them, He frees them. What society can't do - even with all their worldly wisdom to help these men - Jesus, in His power, gives them the peace that surpasses all understanding and frees them from their oppression, their bondage, their shackles.

Then we move on to Jesus healing a paralytic. We're going to be reading chapter 9:1-8. "So He" (Jesus) "got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city. Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, 'Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.' And at once some of the scribes said within themselves, 'This Man blasphemes!' But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, 'Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, "Your sins are forgiven you," or to say, "Arise and walk"? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins' - then He said to the paralytic, 'Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.' And he arose and departed to his house. Now when the multitudes saw it, they marveled and glorified God, who had given such power to men." Here we have a paralytic brought to Jesus by the faith and goodness of a couple friends, clearly looking for this man's body to be healed. But Jesus does something a little out of the norm on this one. He addresses the man's sin condition rather than his physical condition - at least up front. He offers forgiveness of this man's sin, pointing to the reality that our spiritual condition is by far more important than our ability to move our arms and legs. We do not know any of the details regarding this paralytic, and we don't need to. What we need to know is that we - you and I - need forgiveness, or we're no better off. Even with the mobility and physical

health one can only wish for, to die in our sins - to be separated from the Father eternally - you would wish to be a paralytic for a thousand years than to spend one day in Hell. And yet our sins don't give us one day in Hell; they are punishable for all eternity. And here is Jesus.....offering forgiveness to all who will receive it, peace for the soul, peace with God. But that doesn't sit well with some people. And as we share the gospel with hostile people - some of those hostile people being the most religious, as we see here as the scribes react to what's going on, who are far more concerned with appearances and following the rules and completely ignorant to their own evil in their hearts. And like I said earlier, we're all broken whether we know it or not.

And that leads us to our next commercial break, verses 9-17, Matthew obviously changing gears here, giving us a couple stories to learn from. It says, "As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, 'Follow Me.' So he arose and followed Him. Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, 'Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?' When Jesus heard that, He said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: "I desire mercy and not sacrifice." For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.' " Matthew's salvation testimony captures exactly what Jesus is looking for. Matthew, being the writer of this gospel account, is the man being referenced here. And Matthew was a tax collector, and that is a significant piece of information regarding his testimony because it was society's suicide concerning his Jewish brethren by being a tax collector. He made money by ripping off his brethren. He was hated, despised; but yet he chose this path for himself, and there was no turning back for him. I'm sure seeing Jesus doing ministry in the Galilee, he was extremely convicted; especially after just teaching the Sermon on the Mount, I'm sure broke Matthew. His heart, at this point, probably sunk as Jesus was approaching him, feeling the full weight of all his shameful decisions which he was fully responsible for. And Jesus sees him. He sees him fully from the inside out. There's no hiding it from Jesus. And yet Jesus says, "Follow Me." Feeling the acceptance of his Savior, he's ecstatic. He throws a party with all the worst of sinners so that they can meet Jesus too. The Pharisees are looking in on this, absolutely disgusted with what they see. And Jesus sees it, and He responds with this, " 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: "I desire mercy and not sacrifice." For I did not

come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.' " Jesus came to call sinners to repentance, those that knew they were dying, those that know they're broken.

These next three teachable moments about Jesus' ministry are revealed in verses 14-17, which we'll now read. It says, "Then the disciples of John came to Him saying, 'Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?' And Jesus said to them, 'Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast. No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse. Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.' " The second ministry of Jesus is represented as the bridegroom here. The disciples of Jesus didn't fast because God - Jesus - was physically present with them at this time. And with Jesus being at their side, there is cause for joy and not mourning. Jesus came to bring spiritual joy. The third ministry of Jesus is represented as the unshrunk cloth (we just read). Jesus did not come to just patch us up and leave us to fall apart all over again. He came to bring wholeness, not a sewing kit. And the fourth ministry of Jesus is represented as the new wineskins. Jesus came to bring spiritual fullness, not to put new stuff into old things. Jesus didn't come to improve the old system of the Law. There was no improving that. The Law was perfect. However, the Law condemns us. So He came to give newness of life. Through what? Grace. Not through the Law. Grace is what saves us where the Law cannot. So we look to Jesus for our hope and not the Law. It's not Jesus and the Law, it's not Jesus and then clean yourself up, it's Jesus and His grace. That's the point Jesus is making.

Then we move on to restoration for the broken. This is our final set of miracles, four in total. And we have Jairus' daughter and the woman with bleeding healed. And so now we're going to read 18-26. It says, "While He spoke these things to them, behold, a ruler came and worshipped Him, saying, 'My daughter has just died, but come and lay Your hand on her and she will live.' So Jesus arose and followed him, and so did His disciples. And suddenly, a woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years came from behind and touched the hem of His garment. For she said to herself, 'If only I may touch His garment, I shall be made well.' But Jesus turned around, and when He saw her He said, 'Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well.' And the woman was made well from that hour. When Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd

wailing, He said to them, 'Make room, for the girl is not dead, but sleeping.' And they ridiculed Him. But when the crowd was put outside, He went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose. And the report of this went out into all that land." Here we have two different folks requesting healing. One is a leader in the Jewish community; the other, an anonymous woman of no reputation. Jairus is an esteemed man of the synagogue and this woman not even able to worship at the synagogue due to her affliction. Jairus, pleading for his 12-year-old daughter's life; this woman pleading for healing of her 12-year affliction that has only gotten worse over the years. Jairus' need was public. Everyone heard it. Her need was private as she kept it to herself. But Jesus understood. And here they are - both at the feet of Jesus, putting their trust in His power to heal.

We conclude these healings with two blind men and a demon-possessed mute, verses 27-34. It says, "When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, 'Son of David, have mercy on us!' And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, 'Do you believe that I am able to do this?' They said to Him, 'Yes, Lord.' Then He touched their eyes, saying, 'According to your faith let it be to you.' And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, saying, 'See that no one knows it.' But when they had departed, they spread the news about Him in all that country. As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a man, mute and demon-possessed. And when the demon was cast out, the mute spoke. And the multitudes marveled, saying, 'It was never seen like this in Israel!' But the Pharisees said, 'He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons.' " Jesus restores sight to the blind and sanity to the afflicted. Those that were broken have now been restored and made whole. And news of Jesus took to the papers, and it spread all about the country. And yet you still see haters gonna hate, with the Pharisees claiming, "Jesus casts out these demons by the power of Satan." How funny that two blind men had better vision with no sight than the Pharisees who had perfect sight.

And so we arrive to our final teachable moment. Verses 35-36 we will read. It says, "Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd." Here Jesus looks at the multitude of people in the cities and the villages that He visits, and He is "moved with compassion." You want to throw that slide up? (Pastor Jason asks the tech people to put a slide on the screen.)

The Greek word used here for moved is that one.....(Laughing) I know (Pastor) Doug taught you some Greek on Sunday. And here's my little bit of advice to you. Whenever you want to study Greek or say a Greek word out loud, the best way to do it is to say it fast, with confidence, and don't try to sound it out. If you try to sound it out, you're gonna sound stupid. (Laughing) So you just go "splanchnizomai." (Laughing) That's all you've gotta do. Now, that was my Greek. You can take that off (the screen). In the literal sense, this word means "intestines, bowels" - such as when describing Judas Iscariot's death, they reference his intestines spilling out. In the figurative sense, it is the strongest word for pity that you can find in the Greek. The correlation between the bowels and pity is actually pretty obvious. You know when you feel sick to your stomach because you're extremely worried about something? Maybe you've got a 19-year-old son that decided to go to spring break with his stupid friends in Thailand. I'm sure you know what that felt like in your stomach. Jesus felt literal pain in the depths of His stomach, looking at these people and the condition they are in. Not just their physical condition, as many were sick and diseased-ridden, but sick and broken at the spiritual level. The text uses the words "weary" and "scattered" to describe them. Looking at the word "weary," it means to be harassed or severely troubled in the original language, often suggesting the ideas of being battered, bruised, mangled, ripped apart, worn out and exhausted. When Jesus looked on at the people, He saw their wearied condition of their souls being ripped apart by sin. And He uses the word "scattered." In the original language, it means to be thrown down prostrate and utterly helpless as from drunkenness or a mortal wound. Jesus saw these scattered sheep, helpless, defenseless, spiritually-abandoned, having no one to point them in the direction that they should; leaving their souls downcast and hopeless. Jesus, while He cared greatly about their physical needs, agonized over their spiritual state. What we see here is we live in a broken world full of broken people.

Hence, verse 37, "Then He" (Jesus) "said to His disciples," continuing on in our reading, " 'The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.' " Guess what? There is no shortage of broken people in this world. Now here's my takeaway: for us believers, for us Christians, for us who put our trust in Jesus Christ, to those of you in that category listening right now, what you need to do is go back to those times and places where Jesus met you where you were at. Those places where you were broken. The places where the bondage of sin held you and controlled you. The places of pain or hurt that you hoped to never face again. The places where

you were lost and you did not know where to turn. The times you couldn't look into the mirror because of the weight of shame you felt when looking at it. This is where Jesus is moved with compassion and meets us where we are. He puts His arms around us, filth-ridden and all, and He embraces us as a Father who deeply loves His broken child. And His loving touch makes us new. It takes our filthy rags, and it gives us white, glorious robes. He gives us, then, a seat at His table when we know very well we should not even have been invited. This is what it means to be moved with compassion.

Now, with that in mind, we, His children, who have been shown grace upon grace are to carry out the Lord's mission to preach the gospel, to share the truth of God's Word, and to meet people where they are at. And I guarantee you, I guarantee you, you will not do it if you are not moved by Jesus' compassion. Why? Because it requires us to go with others to the place where they are weak and vulnerable, lonely and broken, the places we don't want to be. My grandmother is 103 years old. She's got six kids, now five because one passed. She has near thirty grandchildren, several great-grandkids, and even a few great-great-grandkids. Pretty impressive. However, she spends most of her time living in a care facility with a bunch of people who are dying all around her. And I don't believe my grandmother has a saving relationship with Jesus. To be real, to be moved with compassion, it doesn't mean to think of my grandma and feel sorry for her. To be moved with compassion means to get my butt in the car, fight the ridiculous amount of traffic to get there, park my car where she's staying, walk past the droves of miserable people that are there waiting to die, and spend time with my 103-year-old grandmother who doesn't know Jesus. And sit with her. Talk with her. Share with her. Grab her by the hand and pray with her. Care for her. Love her. And this isn't a one-time visit. It's not a one-and-done and check off the list, I did my part. No. If Jesus only gave me one opportunity to know Him and to know His love for me, I would not be here today, I would not be up here, standing here. This, to love my grandmother, to make sure she knows who Jesus is, this will take my time. It will require me to change my schedule in order to visit her. Will I be inconvenienced? Guess it depends on your perspective. Not if I'm moved by compassion. I'm sure there're a lot of people in your life that you can say the same thing about, people in your life that you have the ability to show that type of love and compassion to. And that's for you.....and between you and the Lord to work out. I reveal mine only because you feel the weight of it when someone actually says something that's real.

Now, can we love every broken person in this fashion? No. That's why we're told by Jesus to pray for more laborers. This is a spiritual work, and you and I are only one person at a time, with only so much time and resources to meet someone where they're at. But we need to pray. We need to pray for more laborers, and then we need to pray to be open of the Lord to see who those people are in our lives that God wants us to touch with our lives because Jesus has touched ours.

I'll close with this. A doctor by the name of Paul Brand wrote a book called "Fearfully and Wonderfully Made." And, in his book, he references these miracles of Jesus we just covered, and he writes this. He says, "Jesus reached out His hand and touched the eyes of the blind, the skin of the person with leprosy, and the legs of the cripple. I have sometimes wondered why Jesus so frequently touched the people He healed, many of whom must have been unattractive, obviously diseased, unsanitary, smelly. With His power, He easily could have waved a magic wand, but He chose not to. Jesus' mission was not chiefly a crusade against disease but rather a ministry to individual people, some of whom happened to have a disease. He wanted those people, one by one, to feel His love and warmth and His full identification with them. Jesus knew He could not readily demonstrate love to a crowd for love usually involves touching." Amen?

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
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