

FOUNDATION OF FAITH!
CHRISTOLOGY: JESUS CHRIST
PART 4

This morning we are continuing our study in Christology or the study of Jesus Christ in our series called Foundation of Faith! We have seen so far in our studies of Jesus that His attributes that He manifests show that He is God; they show us of His deity. We looked at the fact that the Scriptures teach us that Jesus is Eternal, He is omnipotent or all powerful, He is omniscient or all knowing, He is omnipresent or present everywhere and He is unchanging or He is immutable! In other words, Jesus is God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity!

Then we began looking at His humanity. Yes Jesus was fully God and in the Incarnation He was fully man. And we have seen so far, in regards to the humanity of Jesus, that He was born of a woman, that He was subject to the laws of human development, that He possessed the essential elements of human nature or that He possessed a body, soul and spirit. This morning we will continue looking at the humanity of Jesus Christ but before we do, let me share this story with you.

This story is told of Daniel Webster when he was in the prime of his manhood. He was dining with a company of literary men in Boston. During the dinner the conversation turned upon the subject of Christianity. Mr. Webster frankly stated his belief in the divinity of Christ and his dependence upon the atonement of the Saviour.

One said to him, “Mr. Webster, can you comprehend how Christ could be both God and man?” Mr. Webster promptly replied, “No sir, I cannot comprehend it. If I could comprehend him, he would be no greater than myself. I feel that I need a super-human Saviour.”

- Christian Witness

How true that is. We may not be able to understand how God, how Jesus can be fully God and fully man in the Incarnation, but that is what the Scriptures teach us and that is what we are to believe. God never asked us to understand this, but to believe it by faith and that is what I do. So let's continue looking at the humanity of Jesus this morning in our study of Foundation of Faith!

2. HUMANITY OF JESUS CHRIST

HE WAS SUBJECT TO HUMAN PHYSICAL LIMITATIONS

If Jesus was fully man in the incarnation, as well as fully God, then He should be subject to human physical limitations, just as we are. Thus, do the Scriptures show us these physical limitations, do they show us that God became flesh and dwelt among us in the Incarnation? Yes they do and we will look at what the Scriptures have to say regarding this.

JESUS BECAME WEARY

Now how many of you ever get tired? How many of you ever get weary. How many of you ever get exhausted? How many of you ever get worn out? We all do from time to time and so did Jesus because He indwelt a physical body, a body of flesh that had limitations. In John 4:6 as Jesus is traveling to Samaria, we are told, **“Now Jacob’s well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.”**

The Greek word that John uses for **“wearied”** is KOPIAO, (kop-ee-ah’-o) and it means literally to feel fatigue, to work hard. You see, Jesus was still subject to the physical limitations of His full humanity. It is as Gerald L. Borchert wrote,

It is absolutely crucial to recognize that all the Gospel writers were fully aware of the humanity of Jesus. The strategic Christian doctrine of the incarnation is not merely a theological assertion about the deity of Jesus; it is equally a theological assertion about his humanity. Heretical tendencies result when either element is omitted or submerged. Jesus was really a mortal who experienced the bodily weaknesses of being human, even though he did not suffer the human curse of sin (cf. Heb 4:15).

- Gerald L. Borchert, John 1-11, The New American Commentary, p. 201

And thus, we can clearly see that Jesus experienced the human physical limitation of being wearied, or tired, just as we do because He was fully human in the Incarnation!

JESUS SLEPT

Not only did Jesus get tired, but He also slept, another physical limitation of humans. We can't go long without sleep for if we do it not only affects our physical well-being but also our minds. This body needs to rest and so did the body of Jesus in the Incarnation! In Matthew 8:24-25, as Jesus and His men are in a boat to cross the Sea of Galilee and a terrible storm arose, we are told, "**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!'**"

Why was Jesus so tired that this violent storm, the crashing waves, the water blowing on top of Him, the noise of the wind, that none of those things awoke Him? Because he was ministering all day, healing and teaching the people and He was just plain bone tired and I don't know how tired a bone can get, but He was that tired and thus, He slept. Now how can I be sure that He was fast asleep? Because His disciples had to wake Him up, fearful that they were going to drown and thus, that tells me that Jesus was asleep! And we see here another human physical limitation that Jesus experienced.

HE HUNGRED

I don't know about you, but I like to eat. I think most of us do because when people bring food and snacks to the church, they mysteriously disappear! Well, if Jesus had a human body that means He must have hungered for food, He must have gotten hungry and that is what the Scriptures do teach us. In Matthew 4:2 as Jesus is led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit, we are told, "**And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.**"

When we read that after 40 days of not eating Jesus was hungry, no kidding. And the Greek word that Matthew uses of “**hungry**” is PEINAO, (pi-nah’-o) and it speaks of being famished, to crave after food. Physiologists tell us that after about 7 or 8 days of fasting you lose your appetite, you are no longer hungry. And somewhere around the 40th day that hunger returns and it is an indication that death is not far off. Jesus had reached that point, He hungered! Once again this is a human physical limitation, as we all hunger for food, just as Jesus did!

HE SUFFERED PHYSICAL AGONY

We have all been in agony before, suffered from pain, anguish and-so-on, and so did Jesus! In Luke 22:44 we see Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane and He is praying to the Father and we are told, “**And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.**”

As Jesus has the cross before Him we are told that He was in agony over this situation. He knew what it would cost Him, this separation from the Father and He ached over it. The Greek word that Luke uses for “**agony**” is AGOONIA, (ag-o-nee’-ah) and it speaks of the utmost anguish and grief of the soul. How do I know it was that bad? Because we are told that His sweat became like drops of blood. You see, this condition of sweat becoming like drops of blood is a condition that is called hematidrosis and it occurs under great stress as tiny blood vessels rupture in the sweat glands and the blood mixes with water.

That was the kind agony that Jesus faced in the Garden of Gethsemane. Now one more point here and this is important for us to see and understand. When Jesus went into the Garden of Gethsemane He was in agony and yet, when He came out He was at peace. How can that be? Why did His whole countenance, His whole being change? Because He submitted to the will of the Father and He was at peace with it and I think that can happen to us as we are going through a tough time. It will be a battle until we submit to His will and put to death our will! So Jesus was subject to agony, another human physical limitation!

HE EXPERIENCED INTENSE SORROW AND DISTRESS

This one goes along with the physical agony that Jesus experienced and that is that He experienced intense sorrow and distress. We see this at the tomb of His good friend Lazarus, who had died four days earlier and we are simply told, “**Jesus wept.**” John 11:35. Not a very long verse but a powerful verse because it shows to us the humanity of Jesus! And don’t use that for you memory verse this week!

Now this was not the crying out loud in grief but it simply means that Jesus shed tears not just for the death of His friend Lazarus because He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead, but for the pain and suffering that sin had brought into the world, something He came to free the world from one day! And what this emphasizes for us about Jesus is His humanity; He was truly “**a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief**” (Isaiah 53:3). Jesus shed tears because He was human, it speaks of His humanity!

Not only that but in Luke 13:34-35 as Jesus is on the Mount of Olives overlooking the city of Jerusalem, we are told, **“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'”**

Here we see Jesus lamenting over Jerusalem for He sees the power of Rome coming down and destroying her and her only hope is Jesus, whom they have rejected. And when something is repeated, as we see here, **“Jerusalem, Jerusalem”** it is important, it is making something more sure, something we need to listen to. And here it is indicating deep sorrow, deep lamentation for the city and her people. You see, in less than 40 years from this cry, in 70 AD, Rome did come down and destroy the city of Jerusalem, scattering the Jews all over the place!

And thus, we see that Jesus had sorrow and distress over situations that were before Him, He wept, He cried, He lamented and thus, it shows that He was subject to human physical limitations because He was human in the incarnation!

HE DIED

The last one we will be looking at here in this section dealing with the physical limitations of Jesus showing us His humanity is that He died. It has been said that there are two things you can count on in life and that is death and taxes. I will add one more that is even surer and that is Jesus! But let me just give you a few verses to show you that Jesus died, He experienced physical death.

In Matthew 27:50, as Jesus hung on the cross of Calvary to pay in full the penalty for our sins, we are told, “**And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.**” In other words, He died! Again, same situation, we see in Mark 15:37, “**And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last.**” If that is the last breath you take, that means you are dead!

Also, in Luke 23:46, again as Jesus hung on the cross of Calvary we are told, “**And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, ‘Father, “into Your hands I commit My spirit.”’ Having said this, He breathed His last.**” The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, “**And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit! And with these words, He expired. [Ps 31:5.]**” And lastly, in The Living Bible we are told, “**Then Jesus shouted, ‘Father, I commit my spirit to you,’ and with those words he died.**” I think that is pretty clear, Jesus died on the cross of Calvary; He did not just pass out!

And in John 19:30-37 we are told, **“So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, ‘It is finished!’ And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit. Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe. For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, ‘Not one of His bones shall be broken.’ And again another Scripture says, ‘They shall look on Him whom they pierced.’”**

Now please understand that the Romans who were in charge of this, of putting to death these prisoners, knew exactly when someone was dead and when they were not dead. This was their job and they were good at it. And if you don't believe that Jesus died when He gave up His Spirit, then what about the spear in His side in which blood and water came out, probably the blood from a ruptured heart and the water from the fluid in the sack around the heart. I guarantee you this, He was dead, make no mistake about it! And it was not the spear in His side that killed Him, He gave up His Spirit!

One last one and that is in I Corinthians 15:3 where Paul tells us, **“For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.”** The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, **“For I passed on to you first of all what I also had received, that Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One) died for our sins in accordance with [what] the Scriptures [foretold], [Isa 53:5-12.]”**

The death of Jesus Christ was a vicarious or explicit or clear sacrifice for sin. And folks, when you negate the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ you have taken away the Gospel message. There is no Good News apart from that and thus, it is of chief importance to us for without it there is no Gospel! So it is very clear from the Scriptures that Jesus was subject to human physical limitations in that He died!

JESUS WAS SUBJECT TO TEMPTATION

Here is something we might not consider when we think of Jesus, that He was tempted, but that is exactly what the Scriptures teach us. The only difference between Jesus and us is that He did not sin, never, not once, there was no sin found in Him and we will see that in a few minutes. You see, if there was sin found in Jesus then He could not have been that perfect sacrifice for our sins, but He was perfect as Peter tells us, **“knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”** I Peter 1:18-19.

Now before we look at this, let me explain the difference between a trial and a temptation. A trial is something that God will use to test our faith, to strengthen our faith, to help us grow. Peter makes this point in I Peter 1:6-9 as he wrote, **“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith — the salvation of your souls.”**

I don't know how many of us actually are rejoicing in trials, but that is what Peter is saying here, that is what we should do. Why, what is the purpose of these trials in our lives? God brings them into our lives to test our faith and as we are going through these tough times they not only test our faith but they also bring praise, honor and glory to God! In other words, as people look at our lives, as they watch how we handle the tough situations, this trial or testing of our faith, they should see something good in this. They should see our faith shine through and as it does, God gets the glory!

Also, in James 1:2-4 we are told, **“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”** Here again we see James tell us that we are to count it all joy when trials come our way and again, the reason is simple. They come our way to help our faith grow and when we fight against these trials, when we negate what God is trying to show us, we will not grow; it is as simple as that.

In fact, James starts out running here and he tells us “**when you fall into various trials**” not “if.” You see, trials are all around us, you can’t escape them and that is not the issue. The issue is how you handle yourself through them. Trials are going to happen, not might, not if, but “**when**” they do happen, then you need to walk accordingly. Trials are unavoidable.

Now this word “**trials**” is the Greek word PEIRASMOS, (pi-ras-mos’) and the same Greek word is used for “**temptations.**” But I thought God never tempts us? He doesn’t and this is important. God will send a trial in our lives to strengthen our faith but Satan will come along and try to exploit it so that we might sin, he will tempt us. Do you see the difference, God uses the trials in our lives to build us up, and Satan tempts us to destroy us. And these trials come in various ways, they are multifaceted. But don’t ever blame God for what you have done, God doesn’t tempt us with evil, Satan does!

I like the way that Warren Wiersbe put it in his commentary on James. He said: “Our values determine our evaluations. If we value comfort more than character, then trials will upset us. If we value the material and physical more than the spiritual, we will not be able to ‘count it all joy.’ If we live only for the present and forget the future, the trials will make us bitter not better.” You see, perspective is everything!

Here’s the thing. I believe that trials and temptations go hand in hand. In other words, that when God brings a trial into our lives to help us to grow, Satan is there to tempt us to sin in that same trial. Think of it like this as we compare temptations and trials because I think it is important that we understand this. We are told,

What is temptation? Seduction to evil, solicitation to wrong. It stands distinguished from trial thus: trial tests, seeks to discover the man's moral qualities or character; but temptation persuades to evil, deludes, that it may ruin. The one means to undeceive, the other to deceive. The one aims at the man's good, making him conscious of his true moral self; but the other at his evil, leading him more or less unconsciously into sin. God tries; Satan tempts.

- Fairbairn, quoted in *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, J.D. Pentecost, p. 99

Now that we understand the difference between trials and temptations, let's look at the temptations that Jesus faced, things that Satan brought across His path so that Satan might cause Jesus to sin, to be tempted to the point of bringing it into action. We are going to begin looking at this in Matthew chapter 4, starting in verse 1 as Jesus has just been baptized in the Jordan River by John the Baptist and now the Holy Spirit is leading Him into the wilderness and we might say it is to test His faith because, as we will see, Satan is there to tempt Jesus to sin.

Notice what we are told here in Matthew chapter 4, **“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, ‘If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.’ But He answered and said, ‘It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”’ Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: “He shall give His angels charge over you,” and, “In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.”’ Jesus said to him, ‘It is written again, “You shall not tempt the Lord your God.”’ Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, ‘All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Away with you, Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.”’ Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.”** Matthew 4:1-11.

As we look at these three temptations that Jesus faced we can learn a lot to help us when we are tempted. There are some valuable lessons we need to learn here. The first temptation was for his physical needs. Jesus had been fasting for 40 days and He was hungry, He was starving and Satan comes by and says to Jesus that He can command these stones to become bread for Him to eat! In other words, Satan wanted Jesus’ physical needs to control His Spirit.

That is the battle we face every day. Paul said in Galatians 5:17, “**For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.**” The flesh is ugly, self-seeking, while the Spirit is love, patience, joy and-so-on. You can easily tell what is controlling you by what comes out of your mouth, the actions you do.

Now how can we fight against this temptation, a temptation that comes against our physical needs? Just as Jesus did, He used the Word of God to direct His actions and not His bodily appetites. This is the key, allowing the Word of God by the Spirit of God to control the man of God! The power is not in quoting Scripture but obeying it! We need to allow that Spirit life to grow in us and not let the flesh control us, our bodily desires!

The next temptation that Satan levels at Jesus to try and get Him to sin comes right from the Scriptures. You see, Satan knows the Word of God and he will twist it to confuse us and get us to sin. We see Satan quote out of Psalm 91:11-12 but he misquotes it. For the thought is in all of God’s ways, not our ways. And the challenge is if you really trust God, if you really trust His Word, then throw yourself down from the top of this pinnacle to the valley below, maybe some 400 feet, and God will protect you like His Word says. Prove you trust God’s Word!

This is an interesting challenge and I wish more Christians would understand this. It is wrong to deliberately place yourself in danger just to test God's faithfulness. It would be like going out and laying down across the Interstate to prove God will protect you. If you do that, you will be able to ask Him personally why He didn't! We even see that with those Christian's who handle poisonous snakes and drink poison, quoting Mark chapter 16 as their reason for doing it. And yet that deals with missionary work and God's protection, not tempting God. And many have died because of this foolishness. Again, Jesus combats the Devil with the Word of God, quoting Deuteronomy 6:16. Are you seeing a pattern for us to follow here? I hope so.

Let's look at the last temptation that Satan levels at Jesus here and that is the fact that Satan offers Jesus all the kingdoms of the world if He would just bow down and worship him now, worship Satan! Folk's, this was not an empty promise by Satan for in Luke 4:6-7 we are told, "**And the devil said to Him, `All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.'**" God gave to man this world and because of man's sin it was handed over to Satan. In II Corinthians 4:4 he is called "... **the god of this age** ..." In John 12:31, "... **now the ruler of this world** ..." And in Ephesians 2:2 he is called "... **the prince of the power of the air** ..." Thus, Satan could offer all the kingdoms of the world to Jesus, the only catch was He would have to bow the knee to Satan!

Please understand what Satan was doing here. He is telling Jesus that He doesn't have to go to the cross; He can have it all now, immediate gratification! And that is exactly what he tells people today. You don't need to go to the cross; you can have it all now! And sadly, people buy into that lie and have an eternity to think about their mistake. There is no real joy, no real fulfillment apart from the cross!

And again, notice how Jesus counters the attack of Satan. In these temptations Jesus again counters Satan with the Word of God, quoting from Deuteronomy 6:13 and 10:20. Jesus came to do the Father's will, and the cross was part of that. You see, He came to redeem man from his sin and redeem the world back from Satan. Jesus is going to be Lord over all, but first He has to go to the cross!

Don't let the enemy confuse your mind, be in the Word of God and apply it to your life. And you see, the power was not in the quoting of God's Word, but in our submission to it, for it will cause the Devil to flee! It says in James 4:7, "**Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.**"

Let's look at a couple of more verses that deal with Jesus being tempted and specifically that He was tempted and yet without sin. In Hebrews 2:18 we are told of Jesus, "**For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.**" I like this because it tells me that as I surrender my life to the Lord, as I obey what the Spirit is telling me to do, then I can follow the pattern of Jesus, I don't have to sin, I don't have to fall into temptation. The problem that arises through all of this is I often choose to sin, I choose to fall to temptation!

Also, Jesus understands what I am going through, He has experienced the pain, the suffering, the temptations just like I have and thus, He can comfort me, bring aid to me and we will deal more with this in a few minutes.

One more verse and that is found in Hebrews 4:15 where we are told, “**For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.**” Now some say that Jesus was not able to sin even if He wanted to. Others say that He could sin because if He couldn’t those temptations that Jesus was able to overcome would be meaningless to us; there would be no comfort, no hope of withstanding them. Which is right? I like the way that Jon Courson puts it. He says,

In His Divinity, Jesus was solid as the Rock of Gibraltar. His Divine nature could not be tempted. Yet Philippians 2 says when He came to earth, He emptied Himself - He became vulnerable like you and me. Therefore, I believe Jesus could sin because of His humanity, but because of His deity, there’s not a chance He would sin. It would be like if the USS Missouri, armed to the teeth and with 16-inch thick steel plates covering every part of her, pulled into port in San Francisco Bay, and I said, “I’m going to test her to see whether she is seaworthy or not,” and I pulled out Peter John’s BB gun, and started firing away.

Could my BB gun sink the USS Missouri?

While the possibility exists that a BB could set off a chain of events which could somehow sink the USS Missouri, realistically, I would only prove how solid that battleship really is.

So too with Jesus . . .

- Jon Courson, Matthew Vol. One, pp. 68-69

So Jesus was subject to temptation just as we are and thus, this is another human physical limitation of Jesus, showing us His humanity! Now you may be wondering why this is so important to us, why do we have to know and understand this humanity of Jesus? The reason is simple and we just read these verses in Hebrews but it bears repeating because it tells us the reason why we need to know this. In Hebrews 2:18 we are told of Jesus, “**For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.**” And in Hebrews 4:15 we are told, “**For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.**”

Jesus understands everything that we are going through because He experienced it, He saw the pain and suffering of people and thus He can not only come to our aid but He can also sympathize with us because He understands what we are going through. You see, in the Incarnation as God became flesh, He was able to feel what we feel, He was tempted as we are tempted, He experienced what we experience and here is the point I want to make with all this. Not only does that give us hope that we can walk as He walked, that we do not have to succumb to temptations, but we are to have compassion towards people as He has compassion towards us!

Let me explain by giving you this verse in Matthew 9:35-36 where we are told, **“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.”**

As Jesus looked at these people who were in physical pain, who were suffering, He sympathized with them and yet, there is much more to it than that. You see, as Jesus looked at these people He not only saw their physical pains, but their spiritual pains, that they were lost in their sin and thus, He felt compassion for them as they walked in this darkness!

The word that Matthew uses for **“compassion”** literally refers to the intestines or the bowels. It speaks of deep emotion. You know how you feel when something is happening in your life and you may say, “I feel that in the pit of my stomach!” That is the same idea here. Jesus felt their pain, their suffering, the blackness of their sin and He had compassion on them!

Let me give you one more example and then I will explain why we need to understand this. In Mark 6:33-34 we are told, **“But the multitudes saw them departing, and many knew Him and ran there on foot from all the cities. They arrived before them and came together to Him. And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things.”**

Let me set the stage for what we just read here in Mark chapter 6. It has been a long day of teaching and healing for Jesus and Jesus tells His men that they need to get away for a time to get refreshed. And notice the perseverance of the people. They saw Jesus and His men get into a boat to sail the 4 miles to Bethsaida. So they ran around the Sea of Galilee to Bethsaida and beat Jesus there! And I’m sure as they traveled they picked up others who wanted to see Jesus. This is the story of the feeding of the five thousand men and when you include women and children it can be upwards of ten to fifteen thousand people who were hungry, who had needs that came to see Jesus!

Now when you look at what the crowds did you may be wondering why they gathered around Jesus? According to John chapter 6 they came for the miracles that Jesus was doing. They were interested in the supernatural to heal their physical bodies when Jesus wanted to heal their hearts! They came for the wrong reasons.

What did Jesus do? Did He tell them to go away and get their heart right before they come to Him? No, it doesn't say that! Did He just tell them to get lost, to go away that they were bothering Him? No, it doesn't say that! It says He had "**compassion**" on them. It is a word that literally means "I feel it in the pit of my stomach" or "to climb into the skin of another." You see, Jesus felt their pain, their loneliness, their fear, their disappointments and-so-on. These things moved Jesus. They were lost and Jesus wanted to guide them as their Shepherd. That is the love of God, and that is what He wants to do in our lives, even when we may come to Him for the wrong reasons, He wants to guide us back on the path that He has for us. That is the compassion that God has for us because He understands us, He has felt our pains, our sufferings or hurts and thus, He is able to come to our aid, He is able to have sympathy towards us and to do something about it!

So what does this have to do with us? Because of the compassion that Jesus has shown us, we are to reach out to others with that same compassion. And folk's, the only way we will be able to do that is if we come in contact with them. Study the life of Jesus and you will see that He kept reaching out to people, touching them, even those that had leprosy. He not only touched them but He listened to them. And because of this He was able, in a sense, to crawl into their skin and feel what they were feeling and He extended compassion to them. They knew that He loved them. And think about it like this, in the Incarnation didn't Jesus crawl into our skin, in a sense? Absolutely and thus, He is able to feel our pain, our sorrow, our hurt and then reach out to us with compassion and now He tells us to do the same!

Let me give you a few verses to show you what I mean. In I Peter 3:8-9 we are told, **“Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.”**

You see, we are to have compassion towards those in the faith, our brothers and sisters in the Lord but make no mistake about it; we are to be compassionate to all and yes, even those that don't deserve it! I know, “Joe, how can you say that? You don't know what that person did to me! You don't know what that person said to me! And now you want me to show them compassion, get real!”

First of all, do you know what is going on in their lives? Do you know if there are struggles, pain, maybe marriage problems, maybe financial problems, may problems with their children or their health or whatever? You see, chances are you don't know and you don't know because you have not crawled into their skin, in a sense, you have not gotten close to them to know what they are going through, so you can show them compassion, so you can be praying for them instead of blasting them.

Let me give you one more example and then I will rap things up this morning. In Matthew 5:43-48 we are told by Jesus, **“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”**

The difference that Christ should make in our lives is this. We should have His unconditional love flow from our lives and touch the lives of others. We should have compassion towards those around us and not just our brothers and sisters in the Lord and the thing is, many times we are not even compassionate to them. You see, in reality what we do see, is back-biting, anger, hatred, bitterness within the church today! We get upset because this person said this, or that person did this, or I didn’t get that, or I didn’t go there, or whatever. Notice what the solution to this problem is. It has nothing to do with the other person but everything to do with ***YOU!***

Love them, bless them, do good to them, pray for them, no matter what they are doing to you! And do you see what God is doing? He is changing your heart and it may be through you the other person will change, but again, that is not the issue, your heart is the issue! It is as Paul said in Ephesians 5:1-2, **“Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.”**

And folk’s, it is easy to love those who love us back, but you don’t have to be saved to give out that kind of love, for that is conditional love! We are called to love the unloving, those who are nasty to us. It is as Jesus said in John 13:34-35, **“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”** It is as the song goes, “They will know we are Christians by our love!” not by our anger, hatred, bitterness, and-so-on. It truly is the fruit of the Spirit that should flow from our lives and not the ugly works of the flesh!

Paul put it like this in Galatians 5:16-17, **“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.”** You see, are you walking in the Spirit or working in the flesh? Your actions will show you what you are doing!

So what we have seen here this morning is the humanity of Jesus, that He was subject to human physical limitations in that He became weary, He slept, He hungered, He suffered physical agony, He experienced intense sorrow and distress, and He died. And then we saw that Jesus was subject to temptation just as we are and because of that He can understand our pain, our hurt, our suffering, He is able to comfort us and help us. Thus, we are to go and do the same, we are to reach out to others as Christ has reached out to us. We are to have compassion for them and the only way to do that is to get close to them and understand what they are going through as Jesus has done for us when we did not deserve it.

Let me close this morning with this story to show you what I mean. We are told, A first-grader named Billy had a classmate Jim, who lost his father in a tractor accident. Billy prayed for Jim every day. One day as Billy was walking down the stairs at school, he saw Jim and decided to reach out to him.

“How are you getting along?”

“Oh, fine, jus’ fine.”

Billy continued, “Do you know, I’ve been praying for you ever since your daddy was killed.”

The other little guy stopped and looked at Billy, grabbed his hand, then led him out back behind the school building. Then he opened up.

“You know, that was a lie when I said things were going fine; they aren’t fine. We are having trouble with the cows and the machines. My mother doesn’t know what to do. But I didn’t know you were praying for me.”

Just goes to show us, doesn't it, how much people are hurting, but don't feel free to say so until we voluntarily reach out to them.

- Marion Leach Jacobsen, Crowded
Pews and Lonely People

May we reach out with compassion towards others as Christ has done for us. You see, in His humanity Jesus is showing us that surrender, submission to the Lord will enable us to be tested in the fire and come out as gold whereas rebellion and rejection will cause us to be tempted to sin and fall short of all that God has for us. May we learn and live as He desires! You see, people do not care how much you know until they know how much you care! May we get to know people, crawl into their skin as I have said, and pray for them and love them as Christ does, showing them compassion. May we look at them with the backdrop of eternity in mind!