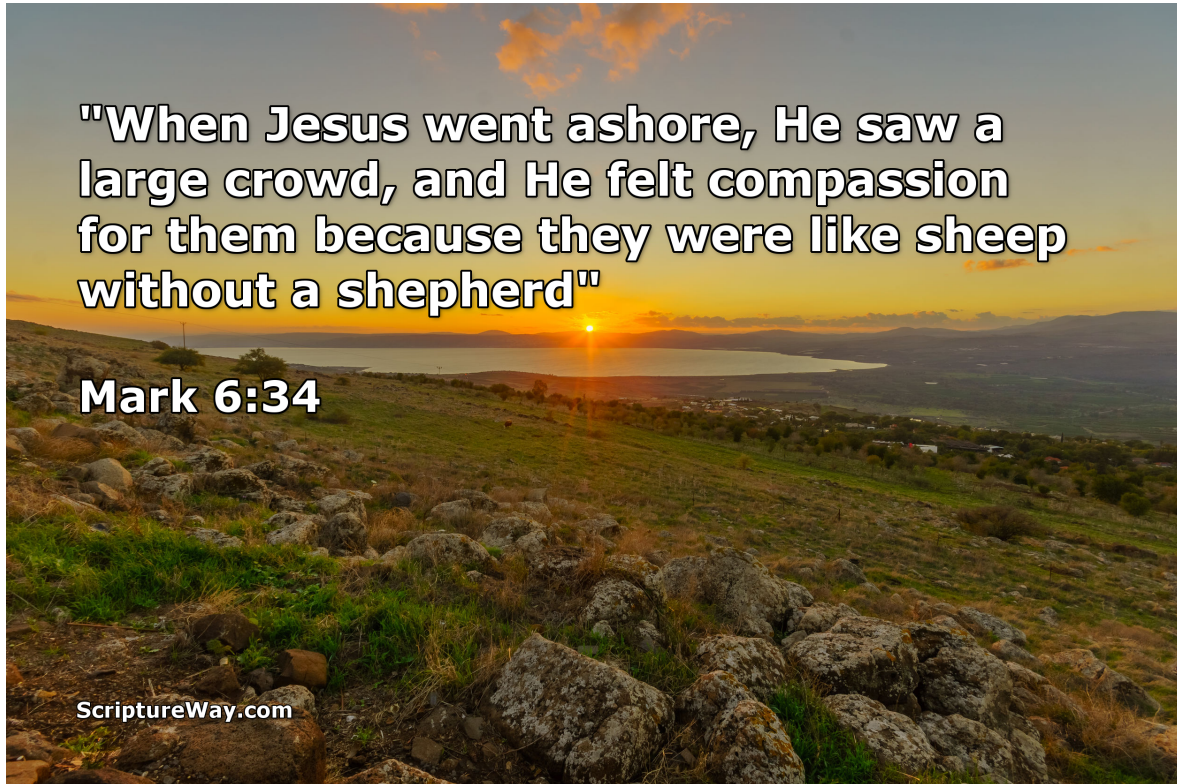


# “The Compassion of Jesus”

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***"When Jesus went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things." (Mark 6:34, underline added)***

This lesson explains Jesus' attribute of compassion towards people – multitudes and individuals. Jesus not only sympathizes with people, but also acts to alleviate their distress.

***Consider.*** As Jesus' followers, we, too, should show compassion to people, including those outside the faith community.

***Definition of Compassion.*** Before we dive into the scriptures, let's take a look at the meaning of the word, *compassion*.

The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines *compassion* as "*sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it*" (Ref. 1). Note the combination of sympathetic awareness of other's distress coupled with action to do something to help them.

In the New Testament, the words, *feel compassion*, literally mean "*to have the bowels yearn*" (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, Ref. 2). In the New Testament time of Jesus' ministry, people thought that our "nobler entrails" (such as the heart, lungs, liver, and kidneys) were the seat of our affections (Ref. 2).

***Jesus Feels Compassion for the Multitudes.*** The scriptures tell us that when Jesus saw the multitudes of people coming to him he felt compassion for them. Why? Jesus was moved with compassion for them because he saw them "*as sheep without a shepherd.*" Mark 6:34 tells us, "When Jesus went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things." Matthew 9:36 is similar, and tells us, "Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd."

Jesus felt compassion for the crowds coming to him because they were a flock that had no protection, no "pasture," no spiritual teaching or guidance, and were in a distressing, painful condition (Ref. 3). They were uncared-for souls, outside of the synagogues of their time. They were weary and hopeless without the Guide and Shepherd who alone can lead them in the way (Ref. 4).

Likewise today, Jesus feels compassion for people who are outside of the faith community, who do not know him as their Good Shepherd, and who are suffering through spiritual misery (John 10:1, 9, 11; Ref. 5). People need to know the compassion of Jesus Christ for them, to have their needs met, and to come to Jesus as their Good Shepherd. That's where we as Jesus' followers can help them.

***Jesus Shows Us Specific Ways To Act with Compassion Towards Groups of People.*** The gospel writers give us examples of how Jesus acted when he was moved with compassion for the multitudes. We, as Jesus' followers, can and should do the same.

*He welcomed them* - "But the crowds were aware of this and followed Him; and welcoming them, He began speaking to them about the kingdom of God and curing those who had need of healing" (Luke 9:11).

*He fed them* - "And Jesus called His disciples to Him, and said, 'I feel compassion for the people, because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat; and I do not want to send them away hungry, for they might faint on the way'" (Matthew 15:32). "And He took the seven loaves and the fish; and giving thanks, He broke them and started giving them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. (37) And they all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, seven large baskets full" (Matthew 15:36-37).

*He healed the sick* - "When He went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and felt compassion for them and healed their sick" (Matthew 14:14).

*He taught them many things* - "When Jesus went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things" (Mark 6:34).

***Jesus Feels Compassion for Individuals.*** The following accounts describe the compassion Jesus felt for specific people, and the action he took to heal or comfort them.

*Jesus touches and cleanses a man from leprosy* - "And a leper came to Jesus, beseeching Him and falling on his knees before Him, and saying, 'If You are willing, You can make me clean.' (41) Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, 'I am willing; be cleansed.' (42) Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed" (Mark 1:40-42).

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*Jesus touches and provides sight to blind men* - "And two blind men sitting by the road, hearing that Jesus was passing by, cried out, 'Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!' (31) The crowd sternly told them to be quiet, but they cried out all the more, 'Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!' (32) And Jesus stopped and called them, and said, 'What do you want Me to do for you?' (33) They said to Him, 'Lord, we want our eyes to be opened.' (34) Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him" (Matthew 20:30-34).

*Jesus comforts a grieving mother* - "Soon afterwards He went to a city called Nain; and His disciples were going along with Him, accompanied by a large crowd. (12) Now as He approached the gate of the city, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a sizeable crowd from the city was with her. (13) When the Lord saw her, He felt compassion for her, and said to her, 'Do not weep.' (14) And He came up and touched the coffin; and the bearers came to a halt. And He said, 'Young man, I say to you, arise!' (15) The dead man sat up and began to speak. And Jesus gave him back to his mother" (Luke 7:11-15).

### ***Summary - Main Principles in this Lesson.***

1. Compassion not only includes feeling sympathy for people, but also a desire to take action to alleviate their distress.
2. Jesus modeled compassion for us - in his interaction with crowds of distressed people and with individuals in need. Often, the people Jesus helped were outside of the "faith community" of Jesus' day.
3. Jesus showed his compassion for people by his actions. Specifically:
  - He welcomed people
  - He fed people
  - He touched and healed the sick
  - He comforted the grieving
  - He taught people many things
4. As Jesus' followers we should view people with the same compassion as Jesus, and take action to welcome them and to alleviate their distress.

**Apply.** As a follower of Jesus, what are ways that you will show the compassion of Jesus to others through your actions?

### **References**

1. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/compassion>
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3. <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/meyer/matthew/9.htm>
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