

ORDER OF WORSHIP with TEXTS
Sunday, May 10, 2020
Homework: Compassion

- I. **Countdown** (Homework Square Graphic)

- II. **Prelude** (Diane)
Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus
Tune: George J. Webb, Public Domain; arr. Rick Parks
played by Diane Gronewold on the UMCA organ

- III. **Intro Reading: Lamentations 3:22-23** (Annika)
Certainly the faithful love of the Lord hasn't ended; certainly God's compassion isn't through! They are renewed every morning. Great is your faithfulness.

- IV. **Welcome** (Rachael)
 - A. Greet and Happy Mother's Day
 - B. Please join me in our opening prayer.

- V. **Opening Prayer** (Rachael)
Holy God, even from a distance, our spirits are gathered together to worship you. Bless us with your presence and open our hearts to your Spirit. Hold us in grief, sustain us in waiting, help us to consider the needs of others, and draw us always nearer to you. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

- VI. **Video: Compassion- Bukola**

- VII. **Song/Hymn - Love Divine, All Loves Excelling**
UM Hymnal Number 384, verses 1 and 3
Words: Charles Wesley, Music: John Zundel
Public Domain

Love Divine, all loves excelling
Joy of heaven to earth come down
Fix in us thy humble dwelling
All thy faithful mercies crown

Jesus, thou art all compassion
Pure unbounded love thou art
Visit us with thy salvation
Enter every trembling heart.

Come, Almighty to deliver,
Let us all thy life receive;
Suddenly return and never,
Never more thy temples leave.

Thee we would be always blessing,
Serve thee as thy hosts above,
Pray and praise thee without
ceasing,
Glory in thy perfect love.

VIII. Reading: II Corinthians 1:3-7 (Rachael)

May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ be blessed! He is the compassionate Father and God of all comfort. He's the one who comforts us in all our trouble so that we can comfort other people who are in every kind of trouble. We offer the same comfort that we ourselves received from God. That is because we receive so much comfort through Christ in the same way that we share so many of Christ's sufferings. So if we have trouble, it is to bring you comfort and salvation. If we are comforted, it is to bring you comfort from the experience of endurance while you go through the same sufferings that we also suffer. Our hope for you is certain, because we know that as you are partners in suffering, so also you are partners in comfort.

IX. Video: WHAT IS Compassion (Harris)

X. Offering Intro/Prayer of Dedication (Laura...already recorded)

XI. "Offertory" Music: *You Raise Me Up* (Dale and Michael with Diane)

Contributors: Graham / Lovland

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XII. Video Compassion-Kari Hannah (video and photos uploaded)

XIII. Song: We are Called

The Faith We Sing Number 2172, verses 1 and 3

Words and Music: David Haas

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Come! live in the light!
Shine with the joy and the love of the Lord!
We are called to be light for the kingdom,
to live in the freedom of the city of God!

We are called to act with justice.
We are called to love tenderly.
We are called to serve one another,
to walk humbly with God.

Sing! Sing a new song!
Sing of that great day when all will be one!
God will reign and we'll walk with each other
as sisters and brothers united in love!

XIV. Gospel Reading: Luke 18:35-43 (Laura)

As Jesus came to Jericho, a certain blind man was sitting beside the road begging. When the man heard the crowd passing by, he asked what was happening. They told him, "Jesus the Nazarene is passing by."

The blind man shouted, "Jesus, Son of David, show me mercy." Those leading the procession scolded him, telling him to be quiet, but he shouted even louder, "Son of David, show me mercy."

Jesus stopped and called for the man to be brought to him. When he was present Jesus asked, "What do you want me to do for you?"

He said, "Lord, I want to see."

Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight! Your faith has healed you." At once he was able to see, and he began to follow Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they praised God too.

XV. Sermon

Hello, UMC Anoka family and friends. Today is Mother's Day, and I want to take a moment to celebrate all the moms tuning in this morning. Like any holiday or special day, people experience them differently depending on their circumstances. For those that gave birth or adopted for the first time, we are so excited that you are celebrating your first mother's day! But I also know that for some, Mother's day is especially hard if you have lost a child. Know that you do not mourn that loss alone. For those that are experiencing motherhood on level expert due to the pandemic, know that you are doing an awesome job even if you don't always feel like you are. We are all doing the best we can, and I am amazed by the moms especially this year. For those of you that fill the role of mother, we are so glad that kids, teens and adults have people in their lives that nurture and love them. We need folks like you more than ever. No matter how you experience Mother's Day today, my prayer is that you feel loved, cherished, and valued today and everyday.

I think the Worship theme this week goes nicely with Mother's day because for some of you, you may have learned compassion from your mom. This series focuses on developing the skills of faith and with each topic there is a little bit of homework for you if you so choose. The first week we learned about patience, and how do we practice patience when things are not going how we want them to. And last week we learned about humility, and Pastor Rachael shared an inspiring story of what it looks like to practice humility. And this week we turn our attention to developing compassion. I am so thankful that we were able to hear from Kari and Bukola today about how they practice compassion in their own lives, and how their compassion is put into action and people's lives are being transformed as a result. I love that they both used the same definition of compassion to explain how they are living out their faith and putting compassion into action.

We all strive to be compassionate people, and from a young age we were taught some of the skills that show compassion to others. For example, as young children we are taught to share with others. Have you ever asked a young child to share something? If they are really young, watch out. The child acts like you asked them to do some really painful thing. Part of the skill parents and caretakers are trying to teach young children is to be aware of the needs of others and practice helping others. It is not elevating suffering by any means, but it is teaching young children to think beyond themselves and the needs of others, even if it is as simple as sharing a ball for fifteen seconds before demanding the ball back, because the other child had a long enough turn. Eventually sharing becomes easier for children, and they start to develop skills and learn empathy and compassion. So you would think as adults, that we would be experts in compassion and putting it into action? Not a chance, I wish I could say that compassion is something that we have all mastered and we can get back to working on other things. Compassion is a hard skill to master because it requires intentional focus on others and their needs. And I don't know if you all have noticed, but humans tend to be pretty selfish people, it is human nature to focus on your own needs first and if you have time or energy maybe you think about tending to the needs of others.

Today I want to talk a little bit about one of the obstacles that get in the way of us practicing compassion. And the gospel reading illustrate one of the obstacles well.

The story centers around a blind man that was begging on the side of the road. Not only is he blind, but he is poor and is trying to provide for himself by asking for money from strangers. He hears a commotion and it is disruptive enough for him to stop someone to ask what is going on. And when he hears that it is Jesus, he cries out: "Jesus, Son of David, show me mercy." He must have known something about Jesus to call him son of David and he believed that Jesus could help him. But those that were leading the group into Jericho stopped to scold the man, and they told him to be quiet. And this is the part of the story where we as the reader roll our eyes and the folks that mess up. I mean come on, this man was in need of help! He has a disability and is on the side of the road trying to provide for himself, and their initial interaction with him is to scold him? How dare they! This man is in rough shape, and instead of being kind at least, they tell him to be quiet. This guy is creating a ruckus, and is getting in the way of the calm journey they are having so far, or maybe they are on a tight schedule and can't possibly stop for even a moment. Or perhaps they already encountered ten blind men on the side of the road, and if you stop for one you have to stop for them all. There are just too many people that need Jesus' help, and their stories are just too sad. Most of them are a mess. Being blind is the least of their problems.

I don't know all the reasons why that blind man was scolded that day. But what they may be experiencing is something called compassion fatigue. Compassion fatigue is most often experienced by those in the helping profession, but it can happen to anyone especially in times of heightened need or crisis. Compassion fatigue is when you begin to experience the inability to have compassion or empathy for those in need. It can happen when the suffering or needs of others begins to feel too overwhelming to someone. And it is easier to throw your hands up in

frustration and remove yourself from the situation. The suffering of others is too painful, and the problem is too big to even begin to think of how to address it.

In the midst of a pandemic when people are dying everyday, and the death tolls are flashed reported on the news several times a day, and the images of people in masks and empty grocery store shelves serve as a constant reminder that things are a mess. People are out of a job, and kids are struggling with online schooling, and loved ones are agonizing while their loved one is alone in a hospital bed fighting for their life. This is just too much to handle. If you are feeling frustrated, irritable, stressed out, or mentally, physically or emotionally exhausted. You are not alone. The weight of the current situation can engulf you before you know it. But before we all resign ourselves to crawling under the bed and not coming out until after the pandemic has ended, I have not gotten to the hopeful part of the Bible reading.

Jesus heard the blind man's cries and asked for the blind man to be brought to him. And when the blind man is brought to him, Jesus asks the man what he needs. Notice that Jesus takes the time to listen to what the blind man needs. A quick glance could give Jesus all the information he needs, to lay hands on him and heal him, or maybe give him some money for food, or ask the disciples to go get him some new clothes. But Jesus illustrates that compassion requires listening to the person in need. Putting compassion into action is not a one size fits all type of thing. Every person is different and in need of something different. In our haste to help or fix a problem we can fall into the trap of thinking that helping other looks more like an assembly line. Each person gets a pat on the back, a kind word, a healing, some clothes, and a place to stay. Throughout the Gospels you see Jesus doing to the opposite of that. Jesus takes time to listen to the person, and hear what is going on. Jesus does not heal the blind man before hearing that he actually wants to see again. In that moment, Jesus' attention is on that one person, not on the other people hoping to be healed by Jesus, on that one person.

The level of suffering in the world is overwhelming on a normal day, but in the midst of a pandemic it feels almost unbearable if you dwell on it for too long. I know that it is exhausting, and I know it feels hopeless some days. How can you maintain compassion for all those hurting when the emotional toll is too much? Aren't we as Christ followers supposed to care about the plight of the world? The answer is yes...but. I want you to consider going from a macro view of compassion to a micro view of compassion. Don't worry about solving the huge problems of this world- things like poverty, cancer, inequality, or war. Instead focus on having compassion on a micro level- one person, one family, one community. You may not be able to solve poverty, but you can take a meal to a family who both adults lost their jobs and are wondering how they are going to pay their bills. You may not be able to find a cure for cancer, but you can go send a card to someone that is in the middle of chemo treatment and let them know that you care about them and are praying for them. You may not be able to solve inequality, but you can advocate for your neighbor that is being treated unfairly by a landlord. And you certainly can't figure out world peace, but perhaps you can be an instrument of peace in your neighborhood when there is conflict between neighbors.

When you go from a macro to micro view of compassion, suddenly living out compassion feels more attainable. And don't sell yourself short on what little acts of kindness and compassion can mean to someone. Which do you think is better, setting a goal to serve a thousand meals to your neighbors and never doing it, or making one meal and bringing it to a family that is out of work? Clearly the one meal is better, versus the lofty goal that produced nothing. I read an article that said that developing compassion is like a muscle, you need to exercise it and build up your capacity for compassion, and without practice your compassion capacity can shrink. So think of compassion like training to run a marathon. On the first day you do not run 26 miles, you would fail and give up. Instead on the first day you walk one mile, that feels a little bit more doable if you have not exercised in a year. And gradually you work your way up to running a mile, and then five miles, and then ten, all the way up to the full twenty-six miles. But even after you run a marathon, that does not mean that you are able to run a marathon a month later. You still need to continue to train.

Developing compassion begins with hearing the cry of one person, and stopping to ask what to do you need? Maybe down the road you can help more people, but for today one person experiencing compassion and love is enough and can change that person's life.

XVI. Song: Mighty to Save (Dave)

Contributors: Ben Fielding, Morgan Reuben

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Everyone needs compassion

A love that's never failing

Let mercy fall on me

Everyone needs forgiveness

The kindness of a Savior

The hope of nations

Savior, he can move the mountains

My God is mighty to save

He is mighty to save

Forever author of salvation

He rose and conquered the grave

Jesus conquered the grave

So take me as You find me

All my fears and failures

And fill my life again

I give my life to follow

Everything I believe in

Now I surrender

Shine your light and

Let the whole world see

We're singing

For the glory

Of the risen king, Jesus

Shine your light and

Let the whole world see

We're singing

For the glory

Of the risen king

XVII. Pastoral Prayer (Rachael)

posted on Life in Liturgy, from the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
<https://lifeinliturgy.wordpress.com/>

Loving God, it is you who gave life and breath to everyone in our world, and in you alone can we find life, breath and meaning for ourselves and our world.

For those who have been blessed with an awareness of your mothering care, who have looked to you for guidance and nurture, we give you thanks, and we pray that you would unite us within your family to be a nurturing influence on others, that they too may enjoy life within your family.

For those who hunger and thirst, who are lost and alone, who yearn to be given new direction, new hope and new life, we pray that you would care for them through us. Let us be seen and known as your faithful children in this community of faith to which you have given birth. Help us to uphold your name by acting, as Jesus our brother, in faithfulness and trust in you.

Today as we honor mothers and all of the people who give us life, we pause to grieve with mothers who have lost their children. To poverty and hunger, to violence and suffering, in self-sacrificing service to others, to sickness of any kind, to self-hatred or self-harm, to accidents and disasters, and to crimes of hate driven by irrational fears or condoned by unjust systems.

Gather us, Lord, as we lift to you the prayers we bring to this day.

Under the shadow of your wings we find our refuge. In your gentle care we find our home. And in your living Spirit we are united this day, Lord, as we offer to you our prayers in the name of your son, Jesus, the Christ, who taught us to pray:

XVIII. The Lord's Prayer (kids, already recorded)

XIX. Spoken Benediction, Share Practicing Compassion (Laura)

XX. Sung Benediction: The Lord Bless You and Keep You

XXI. Postlude

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played by Diane Gronewold on the UMCA organ

