

Impacting Through Compassion

September 3rd 2006

Introduction:

When was a time in your life someone showed you compassion?

How would you define the word "compassion"?

Jesus' ministry was one of compassion. One reason he touched people's lives the way he did was because of his willingness to be on their level and to experience their life with them. He was willing to touch the untouchable, eat with tax-collectors and "sinners" and even raise the dead.

Through the story of raising Lazarus, we will explore what kind of compassion Jesus had for others and how we can reflect that same compassion to people in our lives.

John 11:1-6

Text:

What tension was there between Jesus love for them and his decision to stay where he was for two days?

The Situation:

- If he loved them, he would come and heal Lazarus as he had healed all these other people.
- We tend to think God should immediately answer our requests but sometimes he has better things in mind and like Mary and Martha all we can do is wait for his response and trust he will come through.


When have you had to wait for God's answer only to find out what he had in mind was so much better than what you had asked?

John 11:11-13

They understood Jesus literally. John records other times in his gospel people misunderstood Jesus.

- Nicodemus—"born again" (John 3:3-5)
- Woman at the well—"living water" (John 4:10-14)
- Jews in the temple—"you cannot come" (John 8:21-24)

In each example the people understand him literally but Jesus is talking in symbolic and spiritual terms.



Usually Jesus takes time to clarify what he means. With Nicodemus he tells him that the new birth is of water and the Spirit, not physical. With the woman at the well, Jesus clarifies who he is by telling her details of her life he could only know from God. To the Jews in the temple (John 8) he clarifies by saying where he is going is not of this world. In John 11 he also takes time to explain what he means:

John 11:14-16

Even from a distance Jesus knew Lazarus' condition. Only after Lazarus was dead does Jesus go to Bethany so that "God's Son may be glorified" (verse 4).

Thomas often gets a "bad rap" because of his doubt of the resurrection. Here he goes expecting to die.

What is ironic about Thomas' thinking he will find death in Bethany?

- He will find the dead brought back to life when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.

John 11:17-22

How would you welcome Jesus if you knew he had let your brother die?

- You probably wouldn't welcome him with much compassion.
- You would probably be upset, maybe even angry. Four days in the tomb would seem impossible to reverse.

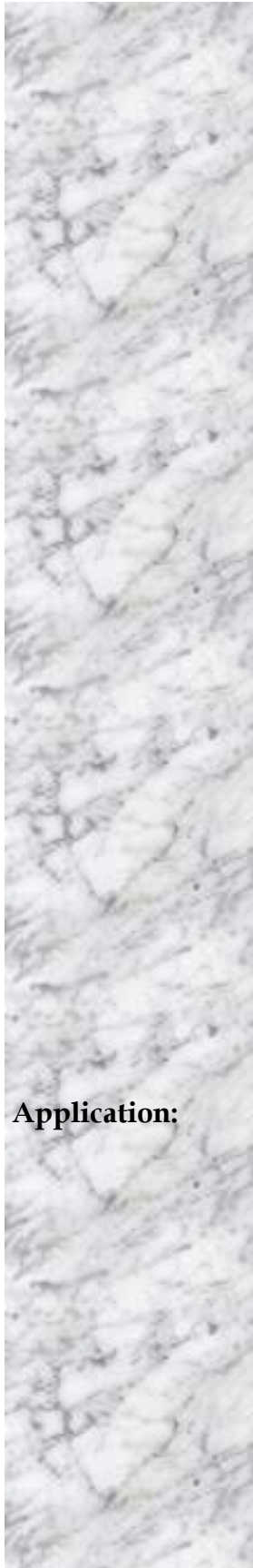
There was an ancient tradition that the soul of a dead person stayed near the body for three days hoping to reenter it. Waiting for four days showed the people Lazarus really was dead with no hope.

Martha was right in saying if he had been there Lazarus wouldn't have died (11:21).

But what limitations to did Martha assume about Jesus' power?

- She assumed he did not have the power to raise Lazarus from the dead.

When in your life have you assumed God couldn't fix your problem only later to find out he answered your prayer?



Under what circumstances have you doubted the power of God?

When are times you had faith in God's ability to work out an impossible situation?

John 11:33-35

How does Jesus' emotional reaction emphasize his compassion for his loved ones?

- Even though he knew he would fix the problem, he still had compassion on them.
- Jesus' weeping shows the full extent of his humanity and his connection with his people.
- This gives us comfort to know he is willing to stand by us and comfort us in our difficult moments.
- He doesn't stand at a distance, stone cold and compassionless.
- He stands at our side, with his arms around us, and has compassion for us.

John 11:38-44

What did the people expect to find in the tomb?

- Exactly what they put in it, a corpse.

How did Jesus' power expand their view of his compassion for them?

- He was willing to do more than comfort them with kind words. His compassion was so strong he would even raise the dead.
- Jesus' compassion for us can help us in our the most difficult situations.

Application:

When in your life has God done something far greater than your expectations of what he could do?

It is clear from this story that Jesus has compassion on us. He is willing to stand next to us in our deepest sorrow and comfort us. We need to have a deeper understanding of the extent of his love for us:

Eph 3:17b-19

The depth of his love is more than tears. It is wider and longer and higher and deeper than anything we can imagine. His compassion is even greater than raising Lazarus from the dead. Everyone Jesus

healed eventually died. He has something better in store for us. Resurrection to eternal life. Because Jesus has compassion on us, he died for us. And through the compassion he had in his willingness to endure a cross, we too will be raised. But unlike Lazarus when we are raised we will never die again.

How does our future resurrection give us hope in our daily living?

- It should help us live more holy lives.
- It helps us live in the expectation that there are better things in store for us than suffering.

We also need to understand our obligation to have the same compassion Christ had for us for other people in our world.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

What are some practical ways we can pass on the compassion of Christ to people in our everyday lives?

How would your life be different if you started showing others the compassion of Jesus?

What specific situation do you need to trust God to work out in your life?

Put it into Practice:

Think of a hurting person you know (loss of a loved one, physical pain, emotional struggles) and find a way to treat them as Jesus would. Let them see the compassion of Christ through your life this week.

Note to Leaders:

[Note to leaders: Please encourage your members to be inviting people to the group. Encourage them to look for visitors on Sunday morning and invite them. We need to get our members in the habit of welcoming and inviting others. As leaders, we are the model for them. If they see us doing it, they will follow. Thank you for all you do!]