

Compassion

As most of you have, I have spent a lot of time watching the news concerning hurricane Harvey. Looking at the images, it is hard to imagine such destruction. Yet out of the terrible disaster that is Harvey, good has emerged. It is just a shame it takes a tragedy to bring out the compassion we should feel for all who are affected by it.

We are reminded of the story Jesus told of the Good Samaritan in **Luke 10**. An **“expert in the law”** has tested Jesus by asking Him **“what must I do to inherit eternal life?”** Jesus allows the so-called expert to answer his own question. Love God, love your neighbor. **“Who is my neighbor?”** the expert asked. I’m pretty sure Jesus didn’t give him the answer he expected. In the parable, Jesus describes a man who has been beaten and robbed. A priest and a Levite pass the man by. A Samaritan, however, helped the wounded man.

Samaritans were half-breed Jews. They were of Hebrew/Assyrian descent and didn’t worship in Jerusalem. Unlike the priest and the Levite, they weren’t believed to be equals by the mainstream Jews. They were hated. They were considered “dogs” by any self-respecting Jew. In the parable, it is the Samaritan who proved himself to be neighbor to the injured man. He dressed and bound up the man’s wounds, put him on his own animal, took him to a place where he could recover, and left word to be notified if anything else was needed. By the way, we are not told the nationality of the wounded man. To the “good Samaritan”, it didn’t matter, and it shouldn’t have mattered to the other two, either.

Compassion has no nationality, no gender, no economic designation. James writes in **James 2** about the evils of showing favoritism. In **verses 2-4**, he says this:

“Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, ‘Here’s a good seat for you,’ but say to the poor man, ‘You stand there’ or ‘Sit on the floor by my feet,’ have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?”

Later in **verses 15-17**, he says:

“Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”

We are directed by God’s word to show compassion and take care of the needs of others wherever we see the need to do so. We show what being a child of God really means when we put our faith into action. It doesn’t necessarily have to be a tragedy like Harvey. Opportunities to show compassion to others are everywhere. We just have to look for them. Sometimes, they find us. Whenever or however they come, action is commanded.

“Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.” (1 Peter 3:8-9)

--- Johnny Stephens