OUR LORD'S COMPASSION IN ACTION

Text: Matthew 17:1-23

The Bible says in Matthew 9:36: "But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." The compassion of our Lord took Him from healing the sick and raising the dead to laying down His life and shedding His lifeblood to redeem us. We can learn much from Jesus in this area. The Word says in Jude verse 22: "And of some have compassion, making a difference:" This is the difference that determines if a church is a good church or a great church. Having compassion is capturing the heart of Jesus. Our text takes us from the transfiguration of Jesus to the transforming power of our Lord in healing a very sick young man. Let us begin with:

1. THE GLIMPSE
Matthew 17:1, 2

The brightness emanating from Christ had no earthly comparison. Mark says it like this, Mark 9:3: "And His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them." There was not a launderer that could whiten any brighter than the display of the glory of God. It brings to mind II Corinthians 4:6: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The same brilliant creative light used in the first day of creation is now encircling the Divine person of our Savior! Luke tells us in Luke 9:29, "And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistering." "Glistering" is translated from the Greek word *exastraptō*, describing the flash of lightning. This experience gave Peter, James and John only a sample of the glory of God. It will require Heaven or a glorified body to withstand a face-to-face encounter of the unfiltered glory of God. Exodus 33:18, 19: "And he (Moses) said, I beseech thee, shew me Thy glory. And He said, Thou canst not see My face: for there shall no man see Me, and live." The disciples could only handle a glimpse; but oh! what a glimpse! John R. Clements wrote a

song that captures the impact of the difference just one glimpse of Jesus could make: "Back to the cold world I will not go, back to the old paths of pain and woe, back to the old life of sin, O no! I've had a glimpse of Jesus."

2. THE GUESTS
Matthew 17:3

Our Lord introduces the disciples to two of the most famous patriarchs in the Bible, Moses and Elijah. Luke is more specific of what these two very special guests were discussing: Luke 9:31: “Who appeared in glory, and spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.” Moses, the representative of the Law and Elijah the representative of the prophets talk about the reason Christ was on the earth, i.e., to die for our sins! The resurrected Lord took time on the road to Emmaus to emphasize that He was the theme of both the Law and the Prophets. Luke 24:27: “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself.”

3. THE DIRECTIVE
Matthew 17:4, 5

When the Lord manifests Himself, we are too quick to make our plans around His person, whereas it would always be best to be still and let God speak when He shows up in power. Matthew 17:5: “While He yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him.”

4. THE POLARIS
Matthew 17:6-8

Christ is the North Star to Whom we direct our attention and from Whom we receive our direction through this life. Matthew moves us from the impressive guests to the main character. Matthew 17:8: “And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.”

5. THE CLARIFICATION
Matthew 17:10-13

Evermore the “keepers of the law,” i.e., the scribes, were reminding everyone the requirement of the coming of Elijah as found in Malachi 4:5: “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.” To this day during the Passover Seder observed by the devout Jews, a special cup known as Elijah's Cup is set aside to honor the prophet Elijah. This practice symbolizes their hope for the future redemption of the Jewish people and the coming of the Messiah. Additionally, a door is often opened, inviting Elijah to enter. Christ is clarifying that John the Baptist was the fulfillment of the Elijah promise, vindicating Jesus as Messiah.

6. <u>THE DESTRUCTION</u>
Matthew 17:15; Mark 9:17,18, 20; Luke 9:39

Let’s examine one of the Bible definitions of the Devil. Revelation 9:11: “And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon [Destruction], but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon [Destroyer].” True to form, John 10:10a enforces that definition: “The thief [the Devil] cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy….” Destroy is translated from *apollymi*, (the same root from Apollyon) meaning: to put out of the way entirely, abolish, put an end to, to ruin, to render useless, to kill.

The Devil has been perfecting his lying and deceiving wickedness for at least 6,000 years. Allow me to illustrate one of his most modern destroying methods. We are experiencing exponentially higher deaths from the drug fentanyl. Like other opioids, it works by binding to opioid receptors in the brain, which are involved in controlling pain and emotions. When fentanyl binds to these receptors, it triggers a strong release of dopamine, a neurotransmitter associated with pleasure and reward. This creates feelings of intense happiness or euphoria, making the drug highly addictive, leading to repeated use. It is now the leading cause of death in America’s youth. It is the most addictive drug ever known. And by far, it is the most lethal drug ever concocted. An amount that could balance on the head of a pin could easily kill you. The severe withdrawal symptoms that occur when use stops further solidify the addiction cycle. In 1999 there were 730 fentanyl overdose deaths. In 2013 fentanyl overdose deaths began to rise significantly, coinciding with

the beginning of the "third wave" of the opioid epidemic, with 3,105 deaths reported. In 2022 fentanyl was involved in approximately 73,838 deaths, which is nearly 24 times more deaths than in 2013 and approximately 102 times the deaths in 1999. And sadly, these are only the documented cases of known deaths. The actual number would be staggering.

7. THE DESPERATION
Matthew 17:14-16; Luke 9:38 (The man's only child). Mark 9:21-24 (with tears, the father pleads, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief").

God responds to the prayer of desperation: Psalm 106:44: "Nevertheless He regarded their affliction, when He heard their cry."

8. THE DIVISION
Matthew 17:17

Our Lord was making a division between the faithless and perverse generation of the world and its failures in every area. The Lord rebukes His disciples when they get caught up in the culture of the unbelieving and wayward world (John 15:18; I John 2:15-17).

9. THE DELIVERANCE
Matthew 17:18; Mark 9:25-27; Luke 9:42, 43

The cure was certain; it was sudden; it was steadfast because it was Sovereign! Jeremiah 32:17: "Ah Lord God! behold, Thou hast made the heaven and the earth by Thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for Thee."

10. THE DISCIPLINE
Matthew 17:19-21

Here our Lord disciplines His disciples with a lesson on the power of intense prayer.

11. THE DESTINATION
Matthew 17:22-23; Luke 9:44, 45; Mark 9:30-32; Mark 9:9

All roads that Jesus took the disciples and all His parables and teachings were leading to the cross. The journey from the Mount of Transfiguration to the miraculous transformation of the young man leads us to the cross.

CONCLUSION: The story of the Olympic high diver on a bright, moonlit night. Christ and His cross are our only hope of deliverance from Apollyon and a life of destruction! John 10:10b: “…I AM come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

-Pastor Pope-