

## Matthew 9:35-10:8

How do you battle an illness? How do you fight a disease such as cancer? You find a drug, do you not, that has more power than the sickness has. Strength against strength; power against power. That's how you win the battle.

This is not how Jesus overcame disease and affliction. This is not how He cast out demons and waged war against sin and evil. Although on the surface it seems to us that He battled with the power of His might; that He forced demons to flee, and forced diseases into submission.

There is a word in our text, however, which jumps off the page at us. A word that is loaded with meaning. It's the word *compassion*. "*When Jesus saw the crowds,*" we're told, "*He had compassion on them.*" This is more than love. It's more than sympathy. It's a word that involves action. One cannot have compassion and just sit on it. When compassion fills the heart, it moves the body. It draws the one having compassion into becoming involved.

Compassion is strength and might; it's power, but not power in the usual sense. Compassion has to do with authority. In fact, we can define authority as power with compassion. This is not what we are used to seeing in the world. Football players, wrestlers, boxers, athletes in general, engage their opponents using force, strength, raw power. You don't see compassion in a boxing ring.

But you see it with Jesus. He had the strength, as God, to force evil into submission. But instead of using power, He used authority: power with compassion. And it broke His heart. This is what compassion means in the Greek text. "*He had compassion*" means that His heart ached. It convulsed with emotion. It ripped His heart in two when He saw the crowds.

There was evil power at work within them. Demons, diseases, afflictions. These have great power against us. These were harassing the people so that they were helpless. When Jesus saw this, He could not stand idly by. He healed every disease. He cast out every demon. Not power against power, but authority against power. The compassion of God against the evils in the world.

Evil has no compassion. It is raw power. You cannot reason with cancer and appeal to its heart. It has no heart. All the powers of evil which are against us couldn't care less about us and how miserable they make us. Compassion is from God. His heart is filled with it. This is why He is constantly being moved to act for us.

And the way He acts is incredible. To have compassion is to suffer with the one who is afflicted. When Jesus had compassion for the crowds, and healed their diseases, He did not do so from a distance. He came to them. In fact, He healed their diseases and afflictions by carrying these for them. This is what the prophet Isaiah writes. Jesus carried our sicknesses and diseases, just as He carried our sins. The diseases did not vanish into thin air. When Jesus healed the people, the leprosy entered into Jesus. The blood issue came into Him. The cancer invaded His body. The depression, the fever, the paralysis came into Him. With every passing day Jesus bore more and more diseases in His body. He carried more and more afflictions. And every sinner He forgave, that sin and guilt was charged to Him. He became the owner of it; the One who possessed it.

And now look at our text and see what Jesus does. He sends out His disciples with authority. Now the twelve will go out and battle sin and evil. They will cast out demons and heal diseases. How? With compassion; Jesus' compassion. He sends them with His authority. These twelve will not get into arm wrestling matches with disease and affliction. They will suffer with the people they heal. They will not remain aloof from them. They will have heartache as they carry Christ to the people, so that the people give their diseases and afflictions to Jesus to carry for them.

I think it's appropriate on this Father's Day to draw a parallel here. Fathers and mothers have authority over their children. This is given to them by God. This means that parents are to be compassionate toward their children. Moms and dads suffer with their children when their child is afflicted with a sickness or a disease. And parents give their child's affliction to Jesus, for Him to carry it, as they commend their child to Him in prayer. Being a parent is not about power. It's about authority: power with compassion.

Power takes for itself. Authority gives because there is compassion in it. Yet how often haven't you and I used power and not authority? Whether we are parents, siblings, or neighbors and friends, we have all acted without compassion. We have been the cause of evil within others. We have wielded power against them in pure selfishness.

Friend, your God is full of compassion for you. He does not stand idly by. He comes to you. Through these words today He is calling you to repent of your sinfulness; to repent of being less than compassionate toward others.

He does not use power to force you to repent. He calls you with compassion. He bids you to look at the cross. See your God dying for you. See the wounds your sins and mine have caused. But see His sufferings as compassion. He could not stand idly by. He died your death. He endured your penalty. And by the authority of the Father, He defeated the ultimate evil power: death itself, by rising from the dead.

You are baptized by Jesus' authority. And now in your baptism there is power with compassion over every evil power in your life. And there is forgiveness. I am authorized, by the office to which I am called, to announce God's grace to you; to speak Jesus' word of forgiveness to you. This is God's compassion. You are forgiven. Your baptism into the wounds of Christ is your assurance. The meal at the altar awaits you. It calls to you. Here is the compassion of your Lord in giving you His own body and blood. With your compassionate Lord in you, you are not left to be harassed and helpless by every evil power. You have Christ in you. This is as good as it gets this side of heaven.

And because this is Father's Day, we can say that fathers and mothers in the home are to be Christ to their children. Christ in forgiving them. Christ in loving and serving them. Christ in showing compassion to them. And Christ in teaching them of His love, and bringing them to church and Sunday school faithfully.

The evil power in the world will have a hard time battling that family when father and mother, in being Christ to their children, show such compassion to them. Amen.