

SLIDE-- **SERMON ON MT. THE CHRISTIAN ACTS OF MERCY AND COMPASSION**

Matthew 6:1-4

We continue our series on Holy Habits and Spiritual Disciplines

By looking at THE CHRISTIAN ACTS OF MERCY AND COMPASSION

Compassion-literally means "coming with passion."

Mercy- Hebrew is Racham: means: to have tender affection, clemency or kindness instead of severity.

This country is so full of opportunity.

Where else can a woman hire another woman to do her housework so that she can volunteer at the Day Care Center where the cleaning woman leaves her child?

Works of Mercy- are the way we show God's love for our neighbor.

Both in the

SLIDE---A. Private acts of Mercy: Visiting the prisons, cloth a neighbor, visit the widow, comfort the orphan, assist the single parents, share the errands and meal ministry

SLIDE ----B. Public Acts of Mercy: Deal with in justice of slavery, war, poverty, abortion, child abuse, spousal abuse, prejudice, racism, gambling, fighting diseases in all forms globally, nationally, regionally and within our churches and families.

When James talks about True Religion which God accepts.

He says its is :

SLIDE----Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. James 1:27NLT

In N.T. times Widows and Orphans were the most vulnerable people of all.

There were no orphanages, Or assisted living centers.

So what a neighbor did meant the difference between life and death.

In a world of no government aid for the poor,

People were completely at the mercy of their neighbors.

We all know the story of Ruth and Naomi.

And how Boaz told his people to let a little grain fall

For Ruth to collect and also protect her as one of their own.

Boaz represented a true form of mercy for two widows.

So for James, and for us.

care for widows and orphans embodied Jesus' second great commandment:

Love your neighbor as yourself Mark 12:31

SLIDE----**I. METHODISTS ARE CALLED TO MERCY AND COMPASSION**

¹"Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. Matthew 6:1

We are to do Holy Habit of mercy and compassion

Because God has asked us.

It is not for personal gain or reward.

That is why without hesitation John Wesley

Called his people to be frontrunners in the practice of mercy and compassion.

He was simply following Jesus way of life.
 It is no coincidence that the Scriptures refer to poverty more than 2,100 times.
 And the only time Jesus ever directly condemned people
 was when, he condemned those
 who overlooked and ignored the weak and dispossessed.

Even if we do not see the poverty,
 God does;
 Even though we do not hear the cry of hungry children,
 God does
 Even though we forget the millions who sleep in rusty metal and cardboard homes.
 God doesn't for a moment.

**SLIDES-----"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they
 were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." Matthew 9:36**

**Jesus never passed by an opportunity to minister to the hungry, empty, the ill, the
 blind, naked, or imprisoned.**

How can we sleep peacefully when hundreds of millions
 do not have enough to eat?
 How can we take a vacation when
 hundreds of millions have no adequate health care,
 No decent roof over their heads
 How can we feel at ease while our part of the world becomes,
 Ever more affluent as other parts remain trapped in poverty,
 Die of AIDS or, are tortured under the hand of tyrants,
 and sold into sexual slavery.

Bono (Bonn—o), the lead singer of the famous rock band U2

Doesn't sing the kind of music I enjoy.
 But he is so right when he says: **"God is in the slums,**
 In the cardboard boxes where the poor play house.
God is in the silence of the mother who has infected her child
 With a virus that will end both their lives.
God is in the debris of wasted opportunities and lives."

50 years ago President Eisenhower said:

"Every gun that is made,
 Every warship launched,
 Every rocket fired signifies in the final sense,
 A theft from those who are hungry and are not fed,
 Those who are cold and are not clothed."

But this is not just a message to the leaders of all nations,
 But to us who profess to be a disciple of Christ.
 Who do not give as God has called,
 Who do not serve as God has served.

We must take a stand against the tyrants of the world.
 We must understand that some things are not negotiable,
 All life is sacred a gift from God,
 no matter what your ethnic background,

Or color of skin,
 Or dialect of language, or age of conception..
 Jesus' acts of mercy and compassion
 Were both private and public.
 Jesus knew that

SLIDE-----II. ACTS OF MERCY HEAL OUR SOULS

³But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. Matthew 6:2-4

It is not the secrecy part that Jesus is concerned about,
 But the purity of the heart.
 What John Wesley found was
 That as we give, we are given.
 As we pour out ourselves,
 God pours into us himself.
 And in so doing we become more and more like Christ.
 In this way God rewards us.
 And pours out his grace into our hearts.
His healing into our hearts.
 His strength.

3 SLIDES---2 Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits- 3 who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, 4 who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, 5 who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. Psalms 103:2-5

We all have seen Christians come to life as they began to give.
 In the church, Salvation Army pantry, hospital visitation, senior center,
 Mission trip and volunteer work..

One woman who was severely depressed after the death of her husband.
 Closed her shades,
 Stayed at home,
 Became a recluse,
 But a friend invited her, begged her, and then came and got her
 To help volunteer at meetings with the less fortunate.
 She said: When she gave to others
 She found God gave strength and hope to her.

One lady told me.
 The best thing I ever did for her husband was
 Ask him to help with a project at church
 She said he is like a new man.

But we have also know other person,
 Where nothing in life is right.
 We can't ever get it right.
 We build a new building.
 It's not big enough, or it's too big.
 We build bigger classrooms,
 their not roomy enough, or we like the old space better.

Are you with me now?
We have a new fellowship area, but the coffee is not tasty enough,

If you're around religious people long enough you will
Uncover some whose god is a vengeful, spiteful, capricious being
Who will steal the joy from your life.
Who seems to love nothing better than to plunge sinners into a lake of fire.

That kind of God and those kind of people
Have me thankful that there is more than one way out of the church.
I just want to get away from them.
They wouldn't give God a dime if He himself asked for it.
Yet their garage is full of two brand new cars.

Where do we get such ideas, and selfish attitudes?
They come from sick minds and bitter hearts.

A man approached Horace Greeley one day
to ask for a donation for foreign missions.
Greeley turned him down but the man continued his plea
and Greeley again said "no".
Finally the unfortunate one said:
"Why, Mr. Greeley, wouldn't you give \$10 to save
an immortal soul from going to hell?"
"No," shouted Greeley, "not half enough people go to hell now!"

I suspect that may be some people here that feel the same way.

God hates the rich whose only aim is to get more.
He hates the dishonesty and violence.
the false prophets who preach only what people like to hear.
He hates the church who is self centered and missionless.
He calls us all to act, serve, sit up and take notice and
Move in the direction of injustice

I was called by a diversity group out of Washington,
Who have been hired by the city to
Try to evaluate whether the Aberdeen community will be receptive
To those who come to us from a different ethnic background.
Working at our beef plant and windmill plant.

Is our main street accepting?
Are our church doors open?
Are our minds fair and just
Do we want Love and compassion for all????
Or will only their money, or services performed be welcomed??

**Remember this is not just advisable,
This is what God requires of you and me.**

SLIDE ---- 12Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13Bear with each other

SLIDE--- and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another.
Forgive as the Lord forgave you. Colossians 3:12-13

**Have you seen the Mercedes-Benz TV commercial
 Where they are crash testing their cars.**

They have the best safety record of all cars,
 And almost every car maker in the world has copied their design.
 When someone asks a Mercedes engineer why their company
 does not enforce their patent on their car's energy-absorbing design.
 The engineer replies in a clipped German accent,
 "Because in life, some things are just too important not to share."

To care means to suffer with the other person.
 To give up advantage for the other person.

SLIDE ----That's what the woman with the flow of blood,
 And the bad theology saw in Jesus-- that he cared.
 She thought she would be healed by magic
 If she could touch his garment.
 No unlike many people today whose car mirrors have beads, and hoops,
 crosses and crystal, or a St Christophers medal hanging from the visors.
 No special magic.
 But Jesus cared.
 Jesus entered into her suffering.

Mercy mean to first of all to empty our own cup
 and to allow the other to fill our cup with their suffering.
 In that way we take away the barriers,
 And we enter into communion with one another.

**It's unheard of today to share or drink from the same cup.
 But many of you drank from the same tin cup at the well on your farm.
 You drank from the same water bottle in the fields.
 We didn't each have our own pure spring water bottle.
 But we shared in the blisters and suffering of haying,
 The sweating in the sun,
 And we shared in the sweet taste of cold water from the common jug.**

Jesus shared his common cup with us
 By entering into our suffering.
 Taking upon himself our sins and stripes
 And reaching out to heal
 And raise our children from the dead,
 So the widow would have a pension and retirement.
 And we can do no other.

SLIDE---- **Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.
 Matthew 25:40 NKJV**

That why we're working with the Masons on a
 Child identity program of fingerprinting every child
 For their safety.

We're working with youth on Wednesdays
 With "All Stars" after school program.
 And are moving to develop more preschool programs
 We hope to begin Upward Basketball and cheerleading for our children
 To attract them and their parents into a love for God.

Can we see quilting parties,
 Cooking clubs, and
 Marriage classes
 More Financial Peace classes
 assisting our young wives and husbands.

**But we are also calling on our families
 To help with relief around the world.**

SLIDE-- ---UMCOR's relief supply warehouse, at Sager Brown Depot in Baldwin, Louisiana.,
 needs your support to provide bedding, sewing and layette kits for
 Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Our own Margaret Wild and Deb Hepperly are going
 Down to work. They are extremely low on kits and are calling for
 33,000 layette kits, 64,000 sewing kits and approximately 1,000 bedding kits
 to meet upcoming needs. They need you to help make kits.
 The directions are in the bulletin.

Maybe you want to help in SD

SLIDE-----Because of the recent funding cut for Indian Health Services,
 There is a critical need for wheelchairs on the reservations.
 70 percent of the Natives American population suffer from health problems,
 such as diabetes and have a great need for wheel chair transport,
 Do you have one in unused in your garage or storage room?
 We can contact : Russell Masartis, Tree of Life Ministry, UMC at (605) 856-4266.

UMCOR was in Aberdeen after the flood of last year. They came to help us,
 Now the Alabama West-Florida Annual Conference is asking help in the recovery from
 the latest round of winter tornadoes damaged that homes and businesses. We can help by
 giving to **Domestic Disaster Response, UMCOR Advance #901670.**

We can help with refugee resettlement from worn torn countries by giving to
New Hope to Newcomers, UMCOR Advance #901779.

SLIDE-----This year United Methodist Global AIDS fund raised over \$800,000
 Training in rapid testing in North Katanga, and the republic of Congo,
 Awareness and prevention program in Sierra Leone,
 Support of children in Belshi Orphanage in Mozambique,
 HIV/AIDS workshops in the Caribbean and Americas, and East Africa.
 Our own Jamie Kenny is returning to Haiti, needs to take with her children's medicines.
 You can help by buying them and bringing them to the church.

SLIDE----- Jesus met needs wherever he saw them children or adult..
 John Wesley took Jesus at his word.
 He personally helped to start school,

Reform prisons,
Do away with Child labor and slavery.
And in so doing created a people called Methodist,
known for their compassion and mercy.

Will you help? You can help,
Next time your shopping buy an additional \$10
of groceries for the Salvation Army pantry.
You can run an errand for a shut in?
Cook a meal for a sick neighbor?
Help visit in Hospital or assisted living center?
Volunteer here at the church.
We can't expect the government to do our act of mercy and compassion.
Anymore than we can expect the government to believe or have faith for us.

Together we can change our world
And make a difference
Because when we give
We give from our hand to hand,
from flesh to flesh,
From heart to heart,
Not from mailbox to mailbox.

Showing mercy and compassion
Is the best tool for evangelism.
Because when we care and reach out in mercy and compassion,
They want to believe like they believe,
And live like they can live.
And so they follow us to find a savior,

SLIDE --Matthew 5:7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

“Lord, lead me today to somebody whom I can serve.”