

Mission Statement

EXPERIENCE HIS COMPASSION

OUR MISSION

"Because God has shown us Love and FORGIVENESS in Christ, we Welcome everyone to EXPERIENCE HIS COMPASSION."

Beth Moore tells of an experience she had at an airport.

Let me condense it for you.

She was sitting reading her Bible and waiting for a connecting flight.

She became aware that everyone was staring at something behind her.

She finally looked over her shoulder and saw another passenger.

He was in a wheel chair and Beth describes the old man.

He could not have been less than 127.

She had never seen a person look that old, and weary and drawn.

He was humped over in his wheelchair.

His hands were veins and bones.

And his grey hair was about to the middle of his back.

His nails were as long as hers - not painted thank goodness.

She went back to her Bible reading.

She already felt God pulling on her spirit and was resisting.

She would rather read than touch real life around her.

She was being moved toward that man.

And she started arguing with God.

Don't make me witness to him - not now.

Put me on the same plane as him.

I'll witness to him there.

But please don't make me get up here and go witness to him.

He was a peculiar looking man and everyone was looking at him.

It was then that she heard God's voice in her spirit.

"I don't want you to witness to him, I want you to brush his hair."

To which Beth's spirit replied, "I'm ready to witness to him now."

"I'm all over this man and he will be one of your redeemed."

"You don't care what we look like as long as he's saved - right?"

Jesus said, "I don't want you to witness, I want you to brush".

She didn't have a hair brush but she walked over to him.

She whispered, "Sir, may I have the pleasure of brushing your hair?"

Of course he was deaf.

He said, "Little lady, if you want me to hear, you'll have to speak louder."

So she repeated it loud enough for him and everyone else to hear.

He looked up and said, "If you really want to."

She found his hair brush at the bottom of his bag.

And she began brushing the mats and tangles out of his hair.

As she started it was like everyone in the room disappeared.

It was just her and this old, tired man.

She completed the brushing and then asked him, "Sir, do you know Jesus?"

He said, "Yes I do, I've known Him since I married my bride."

"She wouldn't marry me until I got to know the Savior."

"But I haven't seen my bride in months."

"I've had open heart surgery and she's been too ill to visit me."

"I've been sitting here thinking what a mess I am for my bride."

With that they said good-bye and he was taken to his plane by an airline hostess. When the hostess came back tears were streaming down her face.

She said to Beth, "That old man is sitting on the plane sobbing.

"Why did you brush his hair, why did you do that, what made you do that?"

I said, "Do you know Jesus? He's the bossiest thing!"

She was able to share God's love and forgiveness with her.

Beth said she learned something that day that she will never forget.

God knows if you're exhausted, if you're hungry.

He knows if you are serving in the wrong place, if it's time to move on.

He knows if you just need your hair brushed.

God knows your need.

God knows because He is a God of compassion.

The prophet Isaiah said, "Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and He will say: 'Here am I. If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.'" (Isaiah 58:9-10)

The words of Isaiah are echoed by Paul in our text today.

Paul spells out two ways to live life.

One option is to live for ourselves separated from Christ.

The other option is to live for others saturated in Christ.

Everything we live for changes when we are in Christ.

Paul says in *The Message*, "So if you're serious about living this new resurrection life with Christ, act like it."

Notice how Paul describes option number one.

I LIFE SEPARATED FROM CHRIST

Paul reminds us of a former lifestyle.

He describes what life used to be like before Jesus.

These are the things that used to consume our thoughts and activity.

Paul isn't sure where to start and stop in describing a life without Jesus. "sexual promiscuity, impurity, lust, doing whatever you feel like whenever you feel like it, and grabbing whatever attracts your fancy. That's a life shaped by things and feelings instead of by God. ... Bad temper, irritability, meanness, profanity, dirty talk. Don't lie to one another." (vs 5, 8-9)

When we exclude Jesus from our lives, life is miserable for others.

Grabbing whatever attracts our fancy.

That might mean we do nice things or kind things, if we feel like it.

Not everything we do will be nasty, but it will always be selfish.

It will make us feel better about ourselves.

What Paul lists are not very nice.

Life separated from Christ leaves a tragic trail of tattered lives.

Paul says all these things should be put to death.

Make sure these things are gone for good.

We don't need to be ruled by temper.

Grabbing at life selfishly doesn't need to dominate.

Lying and cheating, foul language and lust can die.

These things will be replaced with something far better.

Why settle for an inferior life when abundant life is available?

But how is all of this removed from our lives?

We don't need to tackle them one at a time.

We have all probably tried that and lived with the futility and frustration.

If we manage to get one area of sin controlled others spring up to create chaos.

It would as futile as controlling dandelions after they have gone to seed.

Imagine trying to rid your lawn of dandelions by picking one seed at a time.

Trying to control life without Jesus creates a vicious cycle.

Eventually we quit in despair.

We might not be nice but at least we were happy.

There is only one way to see that way of life die.

Paul tells us we have a choice.

There is a better way to live.

II LIFE SATURATED IN CHRIST

When we live in Christ we lose our taste for a selfish life.

Selfishness has nothing in common with Jesus.

When we are clothed in Jesus we can't be mean.

When we are in Christ we have a new nature.

"And have put on the new nature which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator." (Vs. 10)

Elsewhere Paul says the old is gone and all things have become new.

The old way caused by separation disintegrates when we are dead in Christ.

We don't need to tackle the outward evidence of sin.

We don't need to defeat each individual manifestation of sin.

We simply die to ourselves in Christ.

We turn life over to Jesus and He deals with the earthly life.

Jesus gives us a new nature.

The creation story tells us we were created in the image of God.

There have been lots of discussions as to what that might mean.

Those discussions need to take place because we have distorted that image of God.

Life separated from Christ has no similarities to God.

God can't be clearly seen in a life saturated in sin.

And that is where we all start out in life.

Exactly where or what is the image of God?

Paul makes it clear what it means to be created in the image of God.

Being in the image of our Creator means we are Christ-like.

Paul leads the Christ-like life with the quality of compassion.

Compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, patience, caring, forgiving, perfect harmony, peace, thanksgiving, wisdom.

That is an amazing way to live.

But we want to focus primarily on the first quality.

"We welcome everyone to experience His compassion."

If the old nature isn't dead we will have no compassion to offer.

Compassion is evidence that we have **"set our minds on things that are above."** (v 2)

What does it mean to be compassionate?

Compassion means we absorb another person into our life.

That can only happen when we are in Christ.

If we are not in Christ we will be full of ourselves.

When we are full of ourselves there is no room for others.

I read these thoughts several weeks ago.

When we lack compassion we are insensitive.

We will only see an old man with tangled hair.

The lack of compassion means nothing is sacred or revered.

We will only see an old man with tangled hair.

Without compassion everything is laughable.

We will only see an old man with tangled hair.

Everything will be a side show or a joke.

When we are saturated in Jesus there is always room for one more.

Dr. Robert Collier is a member of Vancouver First Church of the Nazarene.

In the book entitled *Love Does That*, he wrote, **"The Church cannot impose its will on society by force but it can with vigorous compassion continue to touch individual lives."** (Robert Collier *Love Does That: Church of the Nazarene Canada*, Neil Hightower, editor, page 143)

In his 2009 report on Nazarene Compassionate Ministries Canada, Clair MacMillan wrote: "Our work in Bangladesh has grown at a rate of 46% per year for the past decade. Someone asked our district superintendent how long he planned for the Church of the Nazarene to grow at that rate. He replied, 'There are 86,000 villages in our country. We have work in 2,000 of them.' The person then asked, isn't that enough? Nathan replied, 'Which ones would you suggest we neglect?'"

Neil Wiseman wrote one of the 2010-2011 missionary reading books.

It highlighted the life and ministry of Tom Nees.

Tom pastored the inner city church in Washington DC

The title of the book caught my eye, *Contagious Compassion*.

In *Contagious Compassion* Neil Wiseman identified three things about compassion.

Compassion attracts.

Sinners and saints, old and young, new believers and veteran Christians, farmers and city dwellers, and nearly everyone else believe the Church should be involved in compassionate ministries.

Compassion is contagious.

Contagious describes the capacity of a germ to cause and spread an illness. Compassion is not a disease.

But when someone is compassionate to you, it will change your life.

Compassion is subversive.

Subversive can mean a revolutionary dimension that undermines.

It undercuts our natural responses to life.

Compassion is a spirit that takes us backward-forward-inward-outward.

It drives us to put the mind of Christ ahead of everything.

And the mind of Christ makes us seek ways to help people.

One person can make a transforming impact.

Dr. Wiseman draws this conclusion about compassion.

"We don't know how to live until we have learned how to give and how to receive. It's hard to be deaf to love and blind to mercy." (*Contagious Compassion: The Life and Ministry of Tom Nees*, by Neil B. Wiseman, page 12 NMI 10-11 reading book series)

There is only one way I know by which we welcome everyone to experience His compassion.

Paul expresses this one thought three times.

"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts." (vs. 15)

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." (vs. 16)

"And whatever you do ..., do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus." (vs. 17)

Be in Christ and let Christ be in you.

That is when we are God's chosen, holy and beloved.

We put on compassion because we are clothed with Jesus.

We put on compassion because our life is hid with Christ in God.

I wish we had time to read some Scriptures that describe God's compassion.

They are in the sermon text that is on our web site.

The references are on the sermon notes.

Take the time to read them and ask this question:

Do I deserve God's compassion?

I am confident of the answer you will discover.

Then ask who is worthy of expressions of Christ's compassion from me.

How will you respond to that answer?

Closing Song Mighty to Save

Exodus 33:19 New Living Translation "The Lord replied, "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and I will call out my name, Yahweh, before you. For I will show mercy to anyone I choose, and I will show compassion to anyone I choose."

Exodus 34:6 New Living Translation "The Lord passed in front of Moses, calling out, "Yahweh! The Lord! The God of compassion and mercy! I am slow to anger and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness."

2 Chronicles 36:15-17 The Message "God, the God of their ancestors, repeatedly sent warning messages to them. Out of compassion for both his people and his Temple he wanted to give them every chance possible. But they wouldn't listen; they poked fun at God's messengers, despised the message itself, and in general treated the prophets like idiots. God became more and more angry until there was no turning back—God called in Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, who came and killed indiscriminately—and right in The Temple itself; it was a ruthless massacre: young men and virgins, the elderly and weak—they were all the same to him."

Nehemiah 9:16-19 The Message "But they, our ancestors, were arrogant; bullheaded, they wouldn't obey your commands. They turned a deaf ear, they refused to remember the miracles you had done for them; They turned stubborn, got it into their heads to return to their Egyptian slavery. And you, a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, Incredibly patient, with tons of love— you didn't dump them. Yes, even when they cast a sculpted calf and said, "This is your god Who brought you out of Egypt," and continued from bad to worse, You in your amazing compassion didn't walk off and leave them in the desert. The Pillar of Cloud didn't leave them; daily it continued to show them their route; The Pillar of Fire did the same by night, showed them the right way to go."

Psalms 25:6 New Living Translation "Remember, O Lord, your compassion and unfailing love, which you have shown from long ages past."

Psalms 77 The Message "You don't let me sleep. I am too distressed even to pray! I think of the good old days, long since ended, when my nights were filled with joyful songs. I search my soul and ponder the difference now. Has the Lord rejected me forever? Will he never again be kind to me? Is his unfailing love gone forever? Have his promises permanently failed? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has he slammed the door on his compassion? Interlude
O God, your ways are holy. Is there any god as mighty as you? You are the God of great wonders! You demonstrate your awesome power among the nations. By your strong arm, you redeemed your people, the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.
Interlude

Psalms 145:9 New Living Translation "The Lord is good to everyone. He showers compassion on all his creation."

Isaiah 49:13 New Living Translation "Sing for joy, O heavens! Rejoice, O earth! Burst into song, O mountains! For the Lord has comforted his people and will have compassion on them in their suffering."

Isaiah 63:7-9 The Message [All the Things God Has Done That Need Praising] I'll make a list of God's gracious dealings, all the things God has done that need praising, All the generous bounties of God, his great goodness to the family of Israel— Compassion lavished, love extravagant. He said, "Without question these are my people, children who would never betray me." So he became their Savior. In all their troubles, he was troubled, too. He didn't send someone else to help them. He did it himself, in person. Out of his own love and pity he redeemed them. He rescued them and carried them along for a long, long time."

Hosea 11:4 Revised Standard Version "I led them with cords of compassion, with the bands of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them."

Matthew 9:36 New Living Translation "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."

Matthew 14:14 New Living Translation "Jesus saw the huge crowd as he stepped from the boat, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick."

Luke 15:20 New Living Translation "So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him."

Romans 9:14-18 The Message "Is that grounds for complaining that God is unfair? Not so fast, please. God told Moses, "I'm in charge of mercy. I'm in charge of compassion." Compassion doesn't originate in our bleeding hearts or moral sweat, but in God's mercy. The same point was made when God said to Pharaoh, "I picked you as a bit player in this drama of my salvation power." All we're saying is that God has the first word, initiating the action in which we play our part for good or ill."

1 John 3:17 New Living Translation "If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God's love be in that person?"

Zechariah 10:6 New Living Translation "I will strengthen Judah and save Israel; I will restore them because of my compassion. It will be as though I had never rejected them, for I am the Lord their God, who will hear their cries."

Micah 7:18-20 The Message "Where is the god who can compare with you—wiping the slate clean of guilt, turning a blind eye, a deaf ear, to the past sins of your purged and precious people? You don't nurse your anger and don't stay angry long, for mercy is your specialty. That's what you love most. And compassion is on its way to us. You'll stamp out our wrongdoing. You'll sink our sins to the bottom of the ocean. You'll stay true to your word to Father Jacob and continue the compassion you showed Grandfather Abraham—Everything you promised our ancestors from a long time ago."

It's one thing to read about God's compassion, or to know about God's compassion but it is a different thing entirely to experience God's compassion. In most cases God's compassion is preceded by God's anger or wrath. If you read the Old Testament accounts of God showing compassion, it is in response to a season of anger and judgment.