

## **A Tradition of Compassion**

Series: Sustainable Faith: The Word

Exodus 34:4-7 (0939)

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### **I. The tradition of Christian compassion is rooted in God himself**

#### **a. A God of compassion and grace**

Exodus 34:4-7a NIV <sup>4</sup>*So Moses chiseled out two stone tablets like the first ones and went up Mount Sinai early in the morning, as the LORD had commanded him; and he carried the two stone tablets in his hands. <sup>5</sup>Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD. <sup>6</sup>And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, <sup>7</sup>maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.*

#### **b. A God who loves us too much to ignore our sin**

Exodus 34:7b NIV *Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation."*

Vows Presbyterian Church in America *I acknowledge myself to be a sinner in the sight of God, justly deserving his wrath, & without hope except in God's sovereign love & mercy to save me.*

#### **c. A God who honors his commitment to his people**

2 Kings 13:23 NIV <sup>23</sup>*But the LORD was gracious to [Israel] and had compassion and showed concern for them because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. To this day he has been unwilling to destroy them or banish them from his presence.*

#### **d. Compassion beyond mere Christmas tradition**

HENRI J. M. NOUWEN *Let us not underestimate how hard it is to be compassionate. Compassion is hard because it requires the inner disposition to go with others to the place where they are weak, vulnerable, lonely, and broken. But this is not our spontaneous response to suffering. What we desire most is to do away with suffering by fleeing from it or finding a quick cure for it.*

Luke 15:20 NIV <sup>20</sup>*So he got up and went to his father. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.*

ERWIN W. LUTZER *Christianity demands a level of caring that transcends human inclinations.*

## II. The holistic nature of Christian compassion

### a. Compassion for the spiritually impoverished

Matthew 9:35-38 NIV <sup>35</sup>Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. <sup>36</sup>When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. <sup>37</sup>Then he said to his disciples, *“The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. <sup>38</sup>Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”*

MARY CAROLYN DAVIES *If I had known what trouble you were bearing; What griefs were in the silence of your face; I would have been more gentle and more caring, And tried to give you gladness for a space.*

William Barclay *The Pharisees saw the common people as chaff to be destroyed and burned up; Jesus saw them as a harvest to be reaped and to be saved. The Pharisees in their pride looked for the destruction of sinners; Jesus in love died for the salvation of sinners*

### b. Compassion for the poor and the lonely

ERWIN W. LUTZER *Regardless of how we define Christ's separation from the world, one fact is clear: he did not separate himself from human beings and their needs. Nor did he limit his concern to the spiritual part of man's personality.*

Zechariah 7:9-10 NIV <sup>9</sup>*“This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. <sup>10</sup>Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other.’*

WILLIAM COWPER (Cooper) *Man may dismiss compassion from his heart, but God will never.*

Exodus 23:9 NIV <sup>9</sup>*“Do not oppress an alien; you yourselves know how it feels to be aliens, because you were aliens in Egypt.*

Mark 1:40-42 NIV <sup>40</sup>*A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.” <sup>41</sup>Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. *“I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” <sup>42</sup>Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured.**

### c. Compassion for one another

Colossians 3:12-14 NIV <sup>12</sup>*Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. <sup>13</sup>Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. <sup>14</sup>And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*

Zechariah 7:10b NIV *In your hearts do not think evil of each other.*

Genesis 3:11-12 NIV <sup>11</sup>*And [God] said, “[Adam], Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” <sup>12</sup>The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”*