



SERMON OF THE WEEK

First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu at Ko'olau

March 11, 2018

A Compassionate Heart (Hope Restored Series)

Pastor Dan Chun

We continue our series on Hope Restored. Today we are departing from studying the Gospel of Mark, but in talking about hope I will speak on the Gospel of Matthew and an Old Testament passage, and I will have some other people to later speak with me.

One of the ways we have Hope Restored is to hear of the Compassionate Heart of God, and how we are to have compassion on others who are less fortunate.

Most of us may have reached a level of income where we can take for granted what we have today. We can forget that most of the world does not have what we have, even if we only have minimal income. In fact, even the homeless here have access to clean water, free public education, and the protection of honest policemen that many developing countries don't provide to their people.

But here's a realistic perspective. Almost all churches in America are wealthy churches compared to the rest of the world. America's average income is in the top 5% of the world.

The Bible gives an interesting look on how to have compassion for those who do not have as much. We know Jesus is especially hard on those who have no compassion. In Matthew 25 comes that timber-splitting speech by Jesus.

Matt. 25:31 "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit upon His glorious throne.

Matt. 25:32 All the nations will be gathered in His presence, and He will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

Matt. 25:33 He will place the sheep at His right hand and the goats at His left.

Matt. 25:34 "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world.

Matt. 25:35 For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home.

Matt. 25:36 I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.'

Matt. 25:37 "Then these righteous ones will reply, 'Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink?

Matt. 25:38 Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing?

Matt. 25:39 When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?'

Matt. 25:40 "And the King will say, 'I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!'

Matt. 25:41 "Then the King will turn to those on the left and say, 'Away with you, you cursed ones, into the eternal

fire prepared for the devil and his demons.

Matt. 25:42 For I was hungry, and you didn't feed me. I was thirsty, and you didn't give me a drink.

Matt. 25:43 I was a stranger, and you didn't invite me into your home. I was naked, and you didn't give me clothing. I was sick and in prison, and you didn't visit me.'

Matt. 25:44 "Then they will reply, 'Lord, when did we ever see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and not help you?'

Matt. 25:45 "And He will answer, 'I tell you the truth, when you refused to help the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were refusing to help me.'

Matt. 25:46 "And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous will go into eternal life."

Eternal punishment! Really, Lord? Really? Is it that important to help the poor? Eternal punishment or joyous eternal life based on whether I have a heart for the poor or the outcast? Well, great, Dan, you have really made me feel guilty. Jesus would say, "Pay now or pay later."

Dan, can't you make it a bit more practical rather than so apocalyptic? Okay we have been strongly warned, so no excuse but now here come the practical. Let's look at an Old Testament Passage instead for a practical approach:

Deut. 24:19 *When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.*

Deut. 24:20 When you beat the olives from your trees, do not go over the branches a second time. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow.

Deut. 24:21 When you harvest the grapes in your vineyard, do not go over the vines again. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow.

Deut. 24:22 Remember that you were slaves in Egypt. That is why I command you to do this.

The first thing it says is that all of us have a field, forest or vineyard where we work. In the passage it is a wheat field, an olive forest of trees or a vineyard of grapes. Most of us, unless you are between jobs, have a job – a field or forest where we make money. But notice the biblical pattern here from God. Wherever, however, you make your income, always leave something of your assets for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow.

If you are harvesting your wheat and you missed a bundle of grain, leave that for the foreigner, the fatherless (orphan), and the widow to pick up. Don't go back and get it. If you're harvesting olives, don't go back a second time to pick the ones you missed. Leave something for the foreigner, the fatherless, and the widow to pick up. When going through your vineyard, don't go back a second time to harvest every single grape. Rather, leave something for the foreigner, the fatherless, and the widow to gather.

It's a very clear pattern: leave something for those in great need. And who has great need in the Bible? The foreigners who aren't from our country, the orphans who are fatherless and motherless because their parents died or abandoned

them, and the widows, who back then, were left penniless. In other words, help the poor. Now we can read this and say, "Well, that makes sense."

But let's go deeper and see how it impacts us today. There is a part in our human nature that says, "Why should I have to share any part of my income with those people? Let THEIR government take care of them." But many governments are corrupt, and the poor are not truly helped. But we can say, "Why do I have to share MY income? It's mine!"

Imagine the Old Testament farmer who hears this word from the Lord, and he says, "Why should I leave something for people to come by later and take from me? They didn't do any of the work. I bought the field. I prepared it. I bought the seeds. I nurtured the trees or vineyard or the wheat. I did all of the work, took the risks and invested. Those poor and outcast didn't do ANY work at all! Zip. Zero! Are you saying God, that these people can JUST WALK IN and take some of MY wheat, MY olives or MY grapes? That's not fair!"

But the Lord says, part of our income or our business must always set aside something for the foreigner, the fatherless, and the widow.

We can say, "But this is MY hard-earned money. The deal of capitalism, may I remind you, Lord, is that one maximizes profits. If I go a second time through my field, forest or vineyard I can make more. I can squeeze out even more profit if I find the grapes, olives and sheaves of wheat I missed the first time. Aren't you a God who is about maximizing your income and profits?"

And the Lord says, "That may be what some televangelists promise you about Me, but that's not what I say. I, the Lord, says, it's not about maximizing one's income. It's about you being a good steward of what I, the Lord, provided you in the first place. It's about your love for people; so whatever you make, leave

something for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow."

And yet there can still be a voice in us that says, "That's just not fair." And for those of us who might think this way, here's what God says at the end of the passage: "Remember that you once were slaves in Egypt. [once you had little]. That is why I *command* you to do this." (Deut. 24:22)

Ouch! This is a commandment? It's not an if-you-want-to, could-you-kinda, if-you-don't-mind-please-do. No, this is a commandment! And the context of the commandment is to "remember that you were slaves in Egypt." God is saying, you were once not as blessed as you are today. You, Israelites, were once slaves! Yes, slaves with no rights and no abundance of food! You worked long hours, sometimes day and night. You were whipped and beaten. You were slaves!

But now you live in a country that is free, and blessed by God. Full of abundance! Do not take that for granted. Hence, in whatever you make, give part of the blessings that I have given you to the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow. And by doing so, you will be saved from the sin of ingratitude.

You will remember the grace that you received in your life from God, where you got something for free. You got a blessed country to live in and a Savior in Jesus Christ who died for you. These are all free.

So we hear this and we ask, "What can we do? Dan, you always give us some kind of take-away in the sermon, what can I do to help the foreigner, the fatherless, the widow? Give me a concrete way to respond to this commandment from God."

One way is for us all to consider sponsoring our first, or another child through Compassion International. By sponsoring a child for \$38 a month, we give up part of our olives, grapes or wheat.

We give up some of our profit our income to help the fatherless. Your money will directly help the orphans who do not have a father or mother, especially the African children who live in HIV/AIDS areas.

Today after the service you have that opportunity. Your support will go to children of families where the father or husband has deserted them or died, and so it goes to the widows. Your support will go to children of other countries, so the foreigners.

Today, we have a chance to respond directly to what the Lord commands by giving to the foreigner, the fatherless and the widows. Compassion does primarily child-sponsorship to follow that child if need be from infancy through college.

How effective is child-sponsorship. Interestingly, magazine Christianity Today's cover issue six years ago was on "The Best Ways to Fight Poverty – Really" (February 2018) Their reporter gathered 16 top researchers who were development economists from Stanford, Berkeley, Michigan State, Yale, Duke and Cornell, to name a few. When the 16 looked at ALL of the main strategies for example – getting clean water to rural villages, fund de-worming for children, provide mosquito nets, give microfinance loans -- the article said,

"Of all the long-term development interventions, child sponsorship received the highest rating." (p. 27, "Cost-Effective Compassion by Bruce Wydick, Christianity Today, Feb. 2012)

Child-sponsorship over the long haul makes the greatest sustainable difference. You get the best bang for your investment of \$38 a month. And the benefit with Compassion International is that, IN ADDITION to helping the child, it ALSO provides among other things – mosquito nets, de-worming, building of homes, and micro-financing through their community intervention programs.

And still some of us might think, "Does the money really go to the kids?" It does. I personally have seen it in five countries. Our former Executive Director Ron Mathieu is on the Board of Directors and has seen it. Child sponsorships really work. It really does help them holistically.