

The Shepherd's Touch

by Koos Combrink

The Lord Jesus feels compassion for the lost and wants to help them, showing us that true rest and fulfillment come from serving him.

Duration: 1:07:44

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 11:28, Matthew 14:15-21, Mark 6:30-31, Mark 6:34, Mark 6:45-46

Topics: "God's Love", "Salvation"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of recognizing the time of grace that God offers to each individual. He uses the analogy of a shepherd and his sheep to illustrate how God knows and cares for each person individually. The speaker also highlights Jesus' compassion for the lost and his willingness to leave heaven and give his life for them. The sermon also mentions the feeding of the multitude, where Jesus demonstrates his love and provision for the people. Overall, the message emphasizes the need for individuals to accept God's invitation and not live their lives like lost sheep without a shepherd.

Transcript

Lord Jesus, it's our prayer that you may speak to us. We need you and your speaking. Only that brings life.

And we pray, Lord, that anything that may hinder you from speaking to us, that you may remove it. Anything which may hinder us from hearing your voice, would you remove it? We ask this in your name. Now it's my prayer that what I want to feel to share with you may be like that five loaves of bread and two fish which the Lord may take and break it and feed his people.

We turn to the gospel of Mark chapter 6. We'll read from verse 30. The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.

So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

So he began teaching them many things. By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. This is a remote place, they said, and it's already very late.

He sent the people away so they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat. But he answered, you give them something to eat. They said to him, that would take eight months of a man's wages.

Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat? And then followed how the Lord Jesus multiplied the bread and the fish and he fed the multitude, 5,000 men without the women and children. So it could be maybe 15 or 20,000 if the others are included. Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida while he dismissed the crowd.

After leaving them, he went up on a mountain, on a mountainside to pray. I'd like us to focus on verse 34. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

In verse 30, we read that the apostles, they had gathered around the Lord Jesus. They had had a very busy time. The Lord had sent them out to preach, to heal the sick, to help the people.

And they just arrived back and they gathered around him to report on what they had taught and done. But when they'd arrived back and they were with the Lord Jesus again, it was very busy. Many people coming and going, we read here in verse 31.

They didn't even have a time to eat. And then the Lord Jesus said, come by yourselves with me that you can have a rest. The Lord Jesus wanted to give them a little holiday.

And they departed on a boat. But the people saw them going and they followed on foot along the shore of the Lake of Galilee. That was how their holiday started.

There were crowds of people waiting for them. What would have been our reaction? Oh no, all these people. Don't they know we are on holiday? How did the Lord Jesus react? When he saw the crowd, he did something to his heart.

He felt something inside. He felt sorry for them. He had pity in his heart for these people.

The Bible says he felt compassion for the crowd. And the reason why, he saw that they are lost. In Palestine, a sheep without a shepherd was a lost thing.

In that part of the world, when a sheep wouldn't have a shepherd, it was in desperate need. On its own, the sheep couldn't get to the parts where there was proper grazing. It wasn't able to get water to drink.

Palestine, parts of it is desert area, other parts semi-desert area. There are parts in the Bible which tell us how the shepherd would draw water for the sheep. Think of Jacob.

If there wasn't a shepherd who could draw water for them and take them to a well, they would die of thirst. A sheep in that part of the country was in grave danger without a shepherd. There were many wild animals.

This is a hard and a rough area and without a shepherd, a sheep was lost. If a sheep would go from the others on its own alone, it would get lost. We know about the parable the Lord Jesus told about the lost

sheep.

I think all of us, or maybe all of us, know Psalm 23. And there we see what the shepherd meant to the sheep. The green pastures, the waters of rest, and the protection against the enemy.

Now here the Lord Jesus saw the people and when he looked at them he knew they are like sheep without a shepherd. And it did something to his heart. He didn't only do something to his heart but he, after that, did something for these people.

I don't know what the Lord Jesus must feel this morning when he looks at us. Can't he but feel a deep compassion? Can't he but feel deeply sorry and have pity when he looks at you? You go around hungry and thirsty spiritually because you go your own way like a sheep without a shepherd. Being destroyed by the devil, the murderer, being destroyed by sin.

But know this, if you live your life like a sheep without a shepherd, that's how the Lord Jesus feels about you. That's why he left heaven and came to earth and gave his life, gave his blood, because that is what he feels for you. We also read in the gospel of John about the feeding of the multitude.

And we know that later on when the people were seeking the Lord Jesus because they had eaten bread, the Lord Jesus spoke very sternly to them. Yes, in his love and compassion he reaches out to us. But if we don't listen, if we remain blind and don't open our eyes, with those people it happened that very sternly he spoke to them and he rebuked them.

He said to them, you are not looking for me because you've seen a sign, but because you've eaten bread. In other words, they were concerned about these earthly things, the bread they could eat, but their eyes haven't been opened to see the sign that he is the bread of life. It is wonderful to know that God has love for a sinner.

It's wonderful to know that Jesus loves us, that he has compassion on a sinner in his lost state. But then we must listen and pay attention to what he tells us and we must obey him. And we must react to his invitation when he says, come to me.

He pours his life out, he poured it out in love, but he's also the God who judges. There is a time of grace for each one of us, but if we despise that time, if we don't bow under God's hand, if we don't accept that invitation, the time of judgment is sure to come. Now it's also known at that time that the shepherd in the evening would take his sheep to the crawl or to the stable.

And at the gate of the stable, the sheep one by one would pass underneath his hand. His hand would move over the back of that sheep. And the shepherd knew his sheep so well that only one strike of the hand over the back of that sheep would tell the shepherd what the condition was of that sheep.

Whether it was sick, whether it maybe got injured in some way, and then the shepherd would attend to that specific sheep to its need. Do you experience that in your life? The hand of the shepherd on you, caring for your needs. But I think sometimes we are afraid of the shepherd, we are not willing to come so close to him that he can move his hand over our back and that he can pay attention to our need.

Perhaps we are too busy, can't come close to the shepherds. Maybe only now and then so that he can show us what is our need and that need can be met. Those people, they didn't know that to have a shepherd in their lives.

Hurt by this world, hurt by sin, destroyed by sin, sick of it, but without a shepherd who can tend to their need. Let us look again at how the Lord Jesus felt. We read here he felt compassion on them, full of pity.

That is how he felt when he saw people in this world in their lost state. Are we one with the Lord Jesus? Or do we have a lot of other worries? Other things keeping us busy. Things which fill our hearts and about those things we think.

If only we could have a little bit of the heart of the Lord Jesus in us. I remember one night I was driving along alone in a pickup. I don't know whether it was one o'clock or two o'clock, but it was quite late.

It was on a Sunday night. By that time it was Monday morning already. The previous day was a very full day.

It was about 20 or more years ago. There where I was a missionary, I had some co-workers, and there was an evangelist, and he said farewell to the congregation. He felt led to go and study further to become a minister.

That Sunday was one of the days when the whole congregation gathered, and it was a matter of the whole day. I knew that at the end of that day we have to pack the furniture and the luggage of this co-worker, and I had to help him to get to his home. By myself I thought maybe he would say, I, it's too late now, can't we leave it, can't we do it tomorrow? But eventually when I got there, he was there ready, and we had to pack and go.

And by the time we've arrived there at his home and offloaded everything, I had to come back, it was quite late. He was a dear man, a dear brother in the Lord. When I arrived at that, in that congregation, one of the elders, one day he spoke to me about this man, and he said, there they don't say Mfundu, they say Muruti.

He says, Muruti, this man, he is one out of a thousand. And during the few years I got to know him, I realized the truth of the words of that elder who said, this man, he's one out of a thousand. I can remember different things out of his life.

One day how he shared his testimony, he was working for the Lord already, but he was still smoking. And how he had a battle with it. One day he shared his testimony with a group of young people, how God helped him, how he realized how sinful he is that although having asked the Lord to help him, he still kept on smoking.

He said, I've prayed and asked God to help me, but in spite of having prayed that, I'm still smoking. But then came the day when he threw the cigarettes away. I think he threw them out the window of a taxi.

He never took cigarettes again. I remember another day when he was already studying, then he would come back to that congregation and he would do practical work there. Then one day he went with me to a little farm school and he spoke to the children.

He asked the children, children, where is your joy? He read from Philippians. Rejoice in the Lord. Where do you find your joy? Is it in the Lord? Now he was a very soft man, softly spoken, a very gentle soft man.

But when he was on the pulpit, I heard him preach a few times, it was like thunder. He was a man, really a man out of thousands, who stood. Some of the people at that time suffered from, one can say, the spirit of politics.

Even the spirit of racism. He didn't allow those things to throw him around. Some people suffered of the spirit of tolerating sin right in the church.

He stood like a pillar. He went to a certain man who had great authority among the people there, a leader, a strong man. He went to him and he said, you are not doing the right thing.

A man one out of a thousand. Now it was this man's furniture and luggage that I was transporting that evening. And on my way back, I experienced something.

I don't know whether he and his wife, they also realized it's late, we are all tired, I have to drive, I don't know, maybe 180 kilometers back home. I don't know whether they maybe prayed and said, oh God, please bless him on his way back. But on the way back, in the pickup while I was driving, I remember I had to fight against drowsiness.

I wanted to fall asleep. It was as if the Lord visited me in the pickup. And I thought and I prayed, Lord, if it is true that there is a hell, and if it is true that multitudes of people are going to hell, then something must be done.

As I was driving along, I wept. Because it is true that there is a hell. And it is true that thousands upon thousands are heading for hell.

Now, it's good to weep for the lost. The Lord Jesus wept over Jerusalem. But it's not enough that drops of tears fall to the ground.

Also, drops of sweat must fall to the ground. Just being emotional isn't enough. And talking about it and thinking about it isn't enough.

There is hard work to be done. I wish that the freshness of the reality of the lost state of people in this world would always be so fresh in my mind. That we can always be one with the Lord when in his heart he has compassion and he feels sorry for lost people without a shepherd.

Now, we read here how the disciples' holiday took another direction. Why? Because they were with Jesus. And he wasn't serving himself.

He was serving his heavenly father. And he was serving people in this world, lost people. Has the Lord Jesus got the right to come and change your holiday? If we go according to our own sinful nature, we'll have a permanent holiday.

Not only a free weekend here and there or maybe sometimes seven days. If we can't deny ourselves and take up our cross, we'll have a holiday till the day we die. It's now only less than a week then the children will have holiday.

The schools, the school will close. Children, when you think of your holiday, can you only think of how you'll ride your bicycle? Can you only think of how you'll swim in the sea? Or how you'll ride your horse? Or how you'll go hunting? I don't say that is wrong. It can be a blessed thing.

Those things can be a blessed thing if it fits into God's program for us. Have our eyes been opened by the Lord Jesus that we see this world and the lost multitudes, lost like sheep without a shepherd? Are we with the Lord Jesus? So that he can show us the harvest and say it's time. The harvest is ripe.

Now the disciples were with the Lord Jesus. And I don't know how much they sensed of what was going on in his heart when he saw the multitudes. The Lord Jesus taught them many things.

Taught them about the kingdom of God. And he fed them. And his disciples was a help to him.

They were the ones who distributed the food. The Lord Jesus needed them there. When they thought it's impossible they have to go and find something for themselves, he said no you give them something to eat.

It was a good thing that they were with him. But there was also something lacking. We read in verse 45.

That was after the feeding of the multitude. Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida while he dismissed the crowd. The Lord Jesus knew now I can't use them.

They shouldn't be with me. I must be alone with the crowd. In that moment they would be a hindrance.

They would be a stumbling block for the Lord Jesus. Maybe you can read it for yourself a few verses further on. When he talked on the water and they thought he was a ghost.

And they had taken him into the boat again. They were amazed and then it says because their hearts were hardened. They didn't understand with the multiplication of the bread.

They didn't understand yet their hearts were hardened. Now I find it like I'm a vessel and they lie a lot. What do you chase? Why am I going down? Please go on dinner.

No good. But I'm going down. I'm tired.

I've been getting the same cuisine. But I'm going to eat Tonga. Go to a corner.

Pauly Gallop booty. I'm a colonel. I'm getting a good thing.

He's usable. That's cool. He's been in.

We have one argument. You booty. No, my baby.

When's the ghillie? Let's ask manga. So sooties away. Well, come on, daughter.

Lawana. Good thing. He's usable.

It was 52 for they had not understood about the loaves. Their hearts were hardened. Now the crowd was very enthusiastic, having experienced how they were miraculously fed.

This is man. There was the belief among the Jews that when the Messiah, when the king comes, he would give them bread. And they were on the point of making him king.

Now, but then he would just be an earthly king to help them to chase away the Romans and fight for them. And here the disciples, they hadn't gained insight yet. They would be one with the multitude.

Jesus must be made king. That's why the Lord Jesus had to send them away. He couldn't use them at that moment.

He had to be alone with the people to stay on God's way. The disciples should have seen, but this bread isn't the main thing. Jesus is the bread.

He would be the bread that would be broken so that the multitudes could be fed so that the whole world could be fed. Later on, according to John, when the Lord Jesus explained to the multitude, I am the bread of life. You must eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood.

That was too much for the people. Even many disciples turned and left the Lord. And at this point here with this miracle, their hearts had been hardened.

They hadn't gained insight yet and they couldn't be a help to the Lord there. He had to send them into the boat. There's a translation in Afrikaans which says he had to force them into the boat, sent them away.

Now to be enthusiastic for the Lord, to work for the Lord, to go for him is a good thing. But to be with him while he's busy in this world like the disciples who were with him, that's what we need. But if we are not on the right frequency, if we are not spiritually one with the Lord Jesus, in touch with him, that we feel what he feels, then we can be a hindrance and we can do more harm than good.

We need the Lord Jesus every step. So that we can be in step with him, one with him, as he's working, that we are available, that he can use us, that he shouldn't leave us aside so that we won't be a stumbling block or do more harm than good. We need to pass under his hand day by day, getting close to him, so that he can show us where we are lacking, that he can work on us.

Nothing should come in between us and the Lord so that we can be in step with him, one with him, all the way. Then he can use us. Now maybe you've also noticed that there are people going day and night.

People whose eyes have been opened to see the sheep without a shepherd, and they are pressing on, working for the Lord, trying to win the lost. Maybe we can't do what they do. We can't undertake the trips they take, working for the Lord, spreading the gospel, winning people for the Lord.

Maybe we can't do that. But do we do what we can? Do we have that heart which the Lord had for the lost? And are our lives like the morning dew to his servants who are toiling day and night? Are our lives strengthening them, refreshing them? When they come back in our midst, they are strengthened to go out again. There are some children in our midst.

Do you see how hard your parents work? Do you notice how busy they are working for the Lord, trying to do what they can to reach people, to introduce the Lord Jesus to them so that they can find a shepherd in their lives? What does your life mean to your parents there in your home? Is your life a burden to them, a worry to them? They've got many other worries. They have to look after God's work. They have to look after God's people.

And instead of strengthening them, refreshing them through your life, you are just another burden upon them, worrying them, pulling them down. Have your eyes not been opened to see the lost state of this world? And don't you appreciate what your parents do, preaching, counselling people, working for the Lord? We also have spiritual parents in this work, in this congregation. As I've asked, our lives, our daily lives, is it like the mourning due to them, strengthening them, urging them on to work for the Lord? Maybe you'll say, but I don't see the gospel the way they see it.

I'm not so convinced about this gospel they are preaching. And that can be a reason for you to be naughty, do things you shouldn't do. But what you are today, what you've received, maybe in terms of education, the privileges you have, what you are today, through which gospel have you received it? And if you have another gospel, what is that gospel of yours doing in your life? Is it driving you on, urging you on

to work for the Lord and save the lost? You may be saying, no, I see the gospel in another way.

How many people's lives have been changed? How many people have been made new through your gospel? Do you stand behind those, strengthening those, helping those who are preaching the gospel? And why do you want another gospel, if all you've received, the way you've been blessed, the way you are privileged above many other people, if you've received it through this gospel? The gospel of the grace of God, through which our lives are cleansed, we are made holy. Not only forgiven, but through which we are made holy. We find here that what the disciples looked forward to, he didn't realize because they were with the Lord Jesus.

Are we totally surrendered to him? That he can change anything in our lives. Not only a holiday, that he can change everything. And that through his grace, we are with him in the same mind as he is, so that the lost can be saved.

Now I want to close with this thought. I read in Colossians, chapter 1 verse 24, about Paul's suffering for the sake of the church. He says in verse 24 of Colossians 1, And now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, which is the church.

In Colossians 1 verse 24, We know the Lord Jesus' afflictions, his suffering, shedding his blood to save people out of this world. For the sake of his church. Now nobody can add to that sacrifice.

He paid the full price. But Paul said there is still some suffering remaining for the sake of the church, in order to gather the church, to look after the church. There is suffering.

In 2 Timothy 2 verse 10, he says, I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. In order to gather the church out of this world, in order to care for the church, to look after the church, Paul says, what is still lacking in regards to Christ's affliction, he says, I fill up in my flesh. He was suffering, he was sacrificing in order to gather the church out of this world and to look after them.

He says, I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they may obtain the salvation in Christ Jesus. Yes, the Lord Jesus brought the full sacrifice. But there are still sacrifices to be made in our lives.

There are still things to be suffered, where we have to deny ourselves, where we have to change our plans and take up our cross, so that God's people can be gathered out of this world and saved and they can be looked after. Are we prepared for that? Or do we rather choose to be on holiday, a permanent holiday? And are we better in looking at the mistakes of those who are toiling, working hard, are we better in that than to pull up our socks ourselves and become part of it? When the Lord Jesus saw the multitudes, he was filled with compassion and he did something for them. May the Lord help us.

Good job. Thank you very much to Dominic Kombrenk for sharing the insight of the Great Shepherd with us. We're going to close now in prayer, but let me just add a thought or two.

I wonder where this crowd was a year or so later. After having eaten, because after this incident, Jesus, after he saw them and had compassion, he taught them and then he fed them. I wonder how many really responded and came to the shepherd.

Were some of them perhaps in the crowd during the Passover where Jesus was to be crucified? I wonder where you'll be in a year or two. The only safe place to be is in the presence of the shepherd coming to him properly, fully, totally. It's not enough to be taught by him.

It's not enough to be fed by him. You might be a come and go type of person. You're part of the crowds.

You come and you listen. You are blessed. You get fed, but then you go again and it's lost on you and you might even find yourself in the crowd that calls for his blood one day.

In Matthew 9.36, it speaks of Jesus going through the towns and the villages, and as he saw the crowds of people, he had compassion of them for they were weary and scattered like sheep without a shepherd. Why were they weary? Because they were scattered. They were not with the shepherd.

You might be experiencing a weariness and a fatigue that is not of God. It's not because of fatigue in the work of the Lord. It's fatigue because of separation from the shepherd.

Jesus says to a specific group of people, those who are tired, those who are heavily laden, the Lord says to them, Matthew 11, come to me. If you are fatigued because of separation from the shepherd, you are just run down and you are heavily laden as a result because it's tough living without the shepherd. And sin isn't an easy load.

It's burdensome and it gets heavier every day. If you want to be safe in a year or two's time, or right till your last breath, you need to be with the shepherd today and stay there. Are you the type of sheep that is prone to wander again and again? Middle Eastern shepherds are known to have the habit of every now and then, if there's a young sheep that just is prone to wander too much and just loves getting away, it has a rebellious spirit, that shepherd will even break a leg of that sheep so that it's forced to be in splinters, so to say, and has to be carried by the shepherd.

So if you are tired and burdened, then come to the shepherd. Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we thank you for such clarity of your word that speaks so clearly and touches right into the very depths of our being.

Thank you, good shepherd, that you were willing to lay down your life for your sheep. Lord, be gracious to us. Grant that we would feel that tug, that pull towards you, that would come and surrender to you.

And learn of you. And stay in your presence. Lord, also in this coming week, we need to have fellowship with you.

Please, Lord, keep us close to yourself. Amen.

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