

## “Compassion”

*Jeremiah 31:3, Zephaniah 3:17, Psalm 139:1-4, Matthew 9:35-38, 10:7, 14:14, 15:32, 20:34, Mark 1:41-42, Luke 7:13-15, 12:7, John 1:16, 10:14, Romans 8:38, Colossians 3:12, 1 John 4:16, 19*

Pastor James York

June 14, 2026

**Prayer for Understanding** Everpresent God we thank you for your word the Bible, pages filled with a holy message and sealed with a kiss from heaven. Speak to us now, let our restless hearts and minds be open. Let the supernatural take hold of us for there is peace, forgiveness and life in your holy love letter to us. Amen

Picture a person who has had a profound positive influence on your life. What feelings did you feel as you authentically connected with them?

Research has found that a fundamental mark of exceptional teachers is the feelings a student experiences in their classroom. Emotional safety and authentic connection foster engagement and academic success. Students usually thrive when they are seen, valued, respected, and safe. When students feel safe to take risks, fail, and try again, they are more open to deep learning. Emotional connection boosts engagement. Students are forty percent more likely to report high engagement when taught by empathetic teachers who build strong relationships.

In our relationships, generally people do not care what you know until they know you care. True enduring love generally requires knowing them. Loving someone involves continually learning who they are as they grow and change over time. Love enables one to perceive each other's true self.

God knows and loves us completely. The psalmist sings: **Psalm 139:1-4 “O Lord, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I am far away. You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do. You know what I am going to say even before I say it, Lord.”** Jesus said: **John 10:14 “I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me.”** **Luke 12:7 “The very hairs on your head are all numbered. So do not be afraid; you are valuable to God.”** The good news of John declares: **John 1:16 “From God's abundance we have all received one gracious blessing after another.”** God has constant, infinite, overflowing love for everyone. Scripture declares: **1 John 4:16 “God is love.”** **Jeremiah 31:3 “God loves you with and everlasting love; God has drawn you with unfailing kindness.”** **Romans 8:38 “Nothing can ever separate us from God's love”** **Zephaniah 3:17 “God is with you. God takes great delight in you. God is rejoicing over you with singing.”** **1 John 4:19 “We love because God first loved us.”**

A theme of Jesus ministry is God's compassion for everyone. Jesus said: **Matthew 15:32 “I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat.”** Next, Jesus fed everyone. As Jesus was traveling, his path crossed with a funeral procession. A mother was grieving the death of her son. Luke states: **Luke 7:13-15 “When the Lord saw her, Jesus' heart overflowed with compassion. “Do not cry!” Jesus said. Then Jesus walked over to the coffin and touched it, and the bearers stopped. “Young man,” Jesus said, “I tell you, get up.” Then the dead boy sat up and began to talk! And Jesus gave him back to his mother.”** Mark describes Jesus' love for a leper: **Mark 1:41-42 “Moved with compassion, Jesus reached out and touched him. Instantly the leprosy disappeared, and the man was healed.”** The good news of Matthew proclaims: **Matthew 14:14 “Jesus saw the huge crowd. Jesus had compassion on them and healed their sick.”** **Matthew 20:34 “Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight.”** **Matthew 9:36 “When Jesus saw the crowds, Jesus had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”**

We are Easter people celebrating that every form of the good news is alive. We are Pentecost people celebrating that God is continually breathing life, peace, joy, love, hope, grace, and goodness into us. We are commissioned people to go, discover, explore, be curious about God's resurrection love transforming every person and the cosmos. Today our scripture explains we are to be people of compassion who share the good news with everyone.

The good news of Matthew: **Matthew 9:35-38, 10:7 “Jesus traveled through all the towns and villages of that area, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And Jesus healed every kind of disease and illness. When Jesus saw the crowds, Jesus had compassion on**

**them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Jesus said to the disciples, “The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask God to send more workers into God’s fields. Go and announce to them that the Kingdom of Heaven is near.”**

Pastor James Somerville recalls a conversation with the calling committee of a church he began to serve. They said they wanted to reach the neighborhood. James replied let us be careful with the word “reach”. People might resent it if they thought someone was trying to “reach” them. Instead let us say we are going to love the neighborhood. And if we are going to love the neighborhood, we need to get to know the neighborhood, because you cannot love someone you do not know. The church then assigned each person a block of the neighborhood with the task of getting to know each person so they can love each person.

In Christian mission, loving before serving is crucial because it ensures that service is motivated by Christlike compassion rather than obligation or personal gain. Love serves as the foundation for building trust and authentic relationships, making the good news tangible. Love shifts the focus from merely accomplishing a task to caring for the individual, ensuring service is people oriented.

Compassion is deep empathy combined with action that relieves suffering, mirroring God’s love for humanity. The Apostle Paul wrote: **Colossians 3:12 “Clothe yourselves with tenderhearted compassion.”**

The International Center for Nonviolent Communication is bringing peace with the purpose of fully valuing everyone’s wellbeing and creating quality connection where everyone’s needs are met through natural giving. The foundation is compassion which transforms how we speak to ourselves and one another, one empathic conversation at a time. Compassion has a heart of understanding and empathy. Loving connection first. When conflict arises, seek empathic connection before solutions. Experience what is alive in each other simultaneously. Trust that in the space of heart connection we have access to a reservoir of creativity where we can find options that meet everyone’s needs. In the context of connection, disagreements can be resolved nonviolently. Compassion is honestly expressing oneself vulnerably and without criticism or blame. Revealing our feelings and needs and asking for what we want, without making demands. Compassion is listening to others with a silent mind and an open heart to connect with the speaker by understanding their meaning, feelings, and needs without judgment. Compassion is attempting to remain empathically present even when we are being targeted with criticism, blame, and other such forms of communication. Compassion believes we are interdependent, that we need one another to live and to thrive. Compassion celebrates every time a person’s needs are met.

It is challenging to have compassion for others if you are not practicing compassion for yourself. Briefly, clarify and identify a situation you wish to celebrate or transform. What do you remember seeing, hearing, physically doing, experiencing? What is the catalyst for your thoughts and feelings? What beliefs swirl around the situation? What sensations are being stimulated in your body? What emotions are activated? We have feelings, pleasant and unpleasant, because we have needs that are met or not met, so what needs can you connect with your feelings? What specific, tangible request do you have for yourself? You can learn more at the Center for Nonviolent Communication [website cnvc.org](http://website.cnvc.org) or follow Jen Gergen who practices, facilitates and teaches Nonviolent Communication locally. Jen Gergen facilitates workshops for our presbytery and offers individual, dyads, and group education.

If you are struggling to have loving compassionate empathy, then show curiosity. If you cannot be genuinely curious, then it is time for self-empathy.

Jesus is compassion in action. In becoming human, God reveals God’s desire for authentic connection with every person and enters into empathy with us experiencing our feelings and needs. God’s compassion adds transformation, healing, and resurrection to empathy.

**Jesus had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.** A shepherd has complete knowledge of each sheep, so they know when a sheep is missing; so, they can provide the forage they prefer, get them to water in the moment they become thirsty, provide specific health care, and a safe place to live, frolic, and sleep. A shepherd knows and loves the sheep and then provides the sheep’s needs.

**Jesus said to the disciples, “The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask God to send more workers into God’s fields.** Jesus is asking the disciples,

and us, to pray for ourselves, to prayerfully learn how to be compassionate to ourselves, so we can prayerfully learn to be compassionate to others.

Is anybody happier because you passed their way? Does anyone remember that you spoke to them today? Is anyone celebrating their feelings that sprang from your authentic connection with them?

Be compassionate in all that you do, because no one knows what another goes through. Be compassionate and make compassion last. Forgive everything that is in your past. Be compassionate in all that you say. If you can't be compassionate, sit down and pray.

“Have a Compassionate Day”

a poem by Lenora McWhorter

*May your blessings be many and your troubles be few. And may you feel God's presence in all you say and do. May your family surround you and give you reasons to smile. May your friends and loved ones go with you an extra mile. May you know joy and gladness and have a life of peace. And may your load grow lighter and all your cares decrease. May your sleep be ever so sweet as you retire each night. And when you wake each morning, may your burdens feel light. May compassion and grace follow you every minute of every day.*

And may you feel the love of God As you go on your way! Amen