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## THE STORY GOES ON

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*From a Sermon Preached in the APNTS Chapel*

Let me tell you a story. It is a story about a man who went on a journey from one city to another. As he was walking along down a long road through the mountains, he was suddenly attacked by robbers. The robbers beat him repeatedly and hurt him badly. They stripped off his fine clothes and stole everything that he had. Then they shoved him down beside the road and fled.

The poor, beaten man was left beside the road almost unconscious, bleeding and bruised. The sun was hot overhead and he was thirsty. But there was no one to offer him water or a cool shelter. He was suffering as he lay there unable to help himself.

Then help suddenly seemed to have arrived! A priest of God was coming down the road toward him! Hope arose in his heart. The priest stopped and looked carefully at the beaten man beside the road.

But the priest thought, "This is a messy business; see what problems some people allow themselves to get into! He probably spent his time with the wrong kind of people—why, he most likely deserves what has happened to him. Anyway, I have standards to maintain, and my own image to keep up. Suppose respectable people saw me here with this disgusting man in his condition. What scandal! Let some of his own kind take care of him!" With this the priest hurried on his way in the service of God.

The poor, beaten man's heart sank in discouragement as he saw the priest go away. Who would help him? He might die out here in the mountains from lack of water or food or maybe even bleed to death. Oh, God, where is help to be found?

Just then, an important-looking man could be seen coming. He was a good man—a religious man, a leader in the community. Surely this man would help him. This man was a Levite—a proud descendent of the same family as Moses himself! The man drew near and stopped close by to look at the poor, beaten man. The Levite thought, “What a poor man—it is too bad what has happened to him. But I am so busy with so many obligations to help others. And I am late already for a very important religious celebration—people will be waiting for me. Surely I have no time to be of assistance. He will certainly understand—and of course, I would wish him well—may his wounds be healed, and may he have a happier day. But I must be on my way—God understands these things. We must do the most good for the most people. Sensible people understand this. God will provide for this poor man.” With that, the Levite hurried on his way, leaving the poor, beaten man beside the road still with no help.

In complete despair the poor man cried out to God for help! He felt his very life beginning to flow out of him—the end might be near.

Then at the last moment, it seemed, a stranger appeared beside him on the road. The stranger was looking at him with sympathy. He moved toward him with a flask of water to drink, and holding the head of the poor beaten man, he helped him take a slow, quenching drink of cool water! Then, the stranger took out oil and wine to bath his wounds.

To the man’s shock he realized this stranger was no priest or even a Levite—why, he was not even a fellow Israelite! This man was his sworn enemy—a hated and despised Samaritan! The poor man began to pull back in horror and disgust, yet the stranger carefully continued to clean his wounds and bandage him. With great care the stranger put the poor man on his own animal and took him to an inn in the nearby town. There he called a physician to attend to the poor man, and he had the innkeeper bring food and drink for the exhausted man. To his amazement this stranger paid all of his expenses and left more besides with a promise to take care of all of his needs.

Now, who was the friend to the man who was robbed and beaten? Was it the man of God; was it the important, busy Levite? Or was it his enemy, the Samaritan? My friend, the enemy?

Luke records something very interesting about this Samaritan. Unlike the priest and the Levite, the Samaritan's heart was filled with compassion for the robbed and beaten man beside the road. He acted out of the compassion and love which filled his heart. It was not because of duty, or because of an obligation. It was because of genuine compassion.

When Jesus looked over the city of Jerusalem and prayed for it, He was moved with a compassion that moved the Lord to tears.

When Jesus saw the multitudes of poor people with all their problems and aching hearts, He was moved by compassion for them!

Jesus, who came to bind up broken hearts, to heal the sick, to raise the fallen, to give sight to the blind, to preach good news to the poor, was moved by the Spirit of Compassion!

Each of us have been in the place of the man beside the road of life. We have been robbed of all we have, beaten by Satan and by the circumstances of life. We too have been left thirsty and hungry, hurting and bruised, and in need of help. It has been Jesus—the one of great compassion—who has come to us and lifted us up out of the “pit, out of the miry clay, and set our feet on the rock to stay!” He has poured the oil of His Holy Spirit into our wounds, and cleansed with the wine of His own precious blood. He has taken us in, people who were strangers indeed, and enemies of God, and made us whole again! He has given us His promises to take care of us all the days of our lives!

Jesus asked the scribe the question, who was the neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers? The scribe replied that it was the man who showed mercy! It was hard for this proud, Jewish leader to say the word, “Samaritan”—because Samaritans were wicked, evil, and hated. But this was the man who showed mercy—the enemy, the one we now call the Good Samaritan—a seeming contradiction in terms.

Then Jesus said to the scribe, “You go and do likewise!” This is not a suggestion that Jesus offered. It is a command—and an imperative!

It is one of those commands Jesus Himself has given us to obey. Will you obey the words of our Lord Jesus? And will you go and “do likewise” today?

In Matthew 25:34 and following, Jesus says, “Come, you blessed of my Father and inherit the kingdom prepared for you ever since the creation of the world. I was hungry and you fed me, I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you took me into your homes, naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me, in prison and you visited me. The righteous shall say, Lord when did we see you hungry and give you food or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and receive you into our homes or naked and clothed you? When did we see you sick or in prison and come to you? Then the King shall say, whenever you did this for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it for me!”

The self-righteous will argue with God that they did not recognize the Lord in doing these things, therefore they should not be held responsible, for surely, if they had the chance to know that they were helping the Lord Jesus, they would have gladly done so. But the King replies to them, “Whenever you refused to help one of these least important ones, your refused to help me. These shall go away into eternal punishment.”

Jesus is calling His people today to let their heart be filled up with the compassionate Spirit. The Holy Spirit is full of compassion and love. He is calling for us to be moved by His compassion for others—especially for the those who are the least important.

The least important in almost any society today are the children. They have the least power, the least amount of money and resources. They cannot vote, they cannot fight back, they cannot even provide for themselves. Yet the Bible in Psalm 103 reminds us that the LORD is the God who has compassion for the children.

Let me share with you a recent true story. In a dirty, filthy, dark prison cell crowded almost four times over capacity—in the midst of stinking smells, human refuse, lice on the floors where they sleep, and disease and sickness—are 40 children. They are held captive in this

prison house of horrors with maybe one meal per day, no exercise, no sunshine, no fresh air, little safe drinking water. There is almost no one to care for them or to comfort them. Alone in the midst of overcrowded conditions they cry themselves to a fitful sleep at night.

Patrick—a 12 year old boy—was one of these least important ones—held in a cage of cement and steel like a pitiful animal. He was lonely—reportedly an orphan—in this cage trying with everything in him just to survive. But into this dark dungeon of despair the light of hope shone! In that desperate place came the tender compassionate hearts of some of our Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary students, graduates, and staff. They shared the tender grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. And later in his cell, this boy lifted up a desperate prayer for deliverance from that dark hole. It was there that he met his “angels of mercy” in the form of APNTS students and pastors. Pastor Greg Fernandez and his wife, Resie, Pastor Francel Francisco, Pastora Luz Tamayo, Pastor Tino Ruanes, Pastor Eddie Morales, Pastor Nick Abad, Pastor Joni Bon, and many others, came, prayed, and befriended this boy and the others. Their hearts were moved with compassion, and they put their compassion into motion. After more than two months of praying, and working, and crying and tears, and pleading, Patrick was allowed to go free into the sunshine of liberty!

Patrick’s body was beaten; he had been malnourished. He was sick and his body was covered with sores. But he was free! What celebration and joy followed his release. The next steps will not be easy. There is much to be overcome. There are decisions he must make. He has an opportunity to experience love from caring people and to be nurtured back to health and happiness.

Just as Patrick was leaving the jail, he went back in to say “good bye” to one of his little friends. They embraced and wept together. The other little boy asked Patrick to please remember him after his release, just like Joseph of old in the prison in Egypt. Patrick said, “He should have come out before me!” Pray for this boy and many others like him that he too might soon be set free! Not free from just a physical prison, but free also from the bondage of sin and evil.

In Matthew 28:19-20, we find the Great Commission given by Jesus to His disciples. The thrust of the commission is to make disciples of the nations. But Jesus also said that we are to “teach them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you.” Among those commands is the command of Jesus found in the story of the Good Samaritan: “You go and do likewise!” Jesus is calling us to do as the Samaritan did—out of hearts moved with His compassion.

Jesus has come to each of us. His love has touched our hearts. We do not do for others out of a sense of duty or only because it is commanded for us to do so. We work for Jesus because His love moves within us to show mercy and to care for the dying and lift up the fallen! The words of the song say, “Come let me weep while you whisper, love paid the ransom for me!” He gave Himself freely and selflessly on the cross to ransom our souls from eternal death. Oh what love He has demonstrated to us . . . “Come let me weep while you whisper - love paid the ransom for even me!”

James 1:27 reminds us that pure religion is to “care for the orphan and the widow, and keep out of the self-serving attitude of the world system around us.” We were once enemies to the grace of God, lost and undone. Jesus Himself came as our good Samaritan, loving us and healing us of all our sins. He who was our enemy has become our best and eternal friend. Now, brother and sister, hear the words of our Lord: “You go and do likewise!” Will you do so today? It may not be to someone in a prison. It may be a word of encouragement to a brother or sister, a small deed of kindness to a stranger, even a cup of cold water given in His name! Maybe it will be someone broken and bruised beside the highway of life who will need a touch of tender loving care. Will “you go and do likewise” today?

The story does not end. There are still those who are coming down the highway of life who fall among robbers, are beaten and robbed, and left for dead. Our Lord is still sending the Good Samaritans to come by, even to “the least of these,” so that we may “lift up the fallen, care for the dying,” and comfort the broken and hurting. Tomorrow some of those same Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological students and staff will attend a funeral for one of these least ones—a ten

year old boy from the streets who died an agonizing death due to drug poisoning. We will weep with the children of the street who knew him so well. Few others will care to attend his funeral. But somehow I think the angels of heaven will be there. I think there are tears in the heart of Jesus. Surely we will weep as well for our hearts have been moved both in his life and his death by Christ's own compassionate heart. With God's help we will be challenged all over again to be like the our Good Samaritan. We will "go and do likewise."