

INTRODUCTION

My name is Charlie King, I'm the Worship Director here. Today we're going to be in Luke chapter 10 if you want to open your Bible up. As you're finding it...

MY STORY

Born and raised in West Charlotte

- **In my blood.** West Charlotte is in my blood - my family has been on that side of town for generations, and my wife and I still live there today. 3 of my grandparents went to West Meck, my dad went to West, mom and sister went to Harding, and my wife and I graduated from West Meck. I played baseball and basketball for West Meck Optimist my entire childhood, and almost all of my memories from childhood are either in west Charlotte or north Charlotte.
 - **I love west Charlotte.** That means that one of the quickest ways to get me to cry is to talk about how much you love west Charlotte, and one of the quickest ways to get me ready to throw hands is to talk down about west Charlotte.
- **My misunderstanding.** Now here's the problem. My experience in west Charlotte has been a unique one. I've grown up in privilege inside of a context that is, for the most part, unprivileged. There are multiple narratives at play in west Charlotte, and I grew up assuming that everyone around me had the same general storyline as me. In actuality, my experience in life was not and never will be the same as most of my classmates of color in particular. And while I didn't realize it to be the case, I really lacked compassion for them. I thought for most of my life that just

being a fan made me a friend, that proximity made me close. But you can't truly be close without compassion.

- **God's work in me.** But by God's amazing grace, he has been doing a work in me for the last year and a half that I didn't even know I needed. He's been opening my eyes and wounding me over the state of my neighbors, and revealing the sin of using blessing to serve primarily myself.
 - **The hands of the gospel.** In a new way he's been drawing me into the hands of the gospel, the beauty and joy of *doing*. Or, the way Pastor Spence put it last week, a refusal to preach what I don't practice or practice what I don't preach. I don't want to settle for only the head and the heart of the gospel - I want it to move through my hands.

TODAY

A complete Christian life moves the head, the heart, and the hands

- **Explanation of head, heart, hands.** What I mean by that is that the complete Christian life is knowing God, loving God, *and* displaying his love.
- **Jesus shows us the hands.** In *The Way Of Jesus* series, we have seen what lies at the heart of Christ and how to live as a Christian. And today Jesus is going to show us the hands of the Christian life, the *action* that comes with following Christ. And he's going to do it through one of his most famous parables - the Good Samaritan.
- **Compassion is a verb.** In this parable we're going to focus on one specific idea, and that idea is the title of today's

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sermon: **Compassion Is a Verb**. Yes, I know you english majors are getting ready to email me now, but the biblical view of compassion is that compassion is action - that the affections of the heart are completed by the work of the hands.

- **Where we're going.** So here's where we're going. I'm going to:
 - Read our passage to you and let the Word show you the main idea
 - Show you what active compassion looks like and how Jesus is its perfect embodiment
 - What we do in response

Start by resting in the work of Christ

- **The purpose of the passage.** The Good Samaritan is one of the most well-known passages of the New Testament and we usually turn it into a lesson on how to care for the poor and oppressed. But Jesus' point was actually to help a lawyer understand what true compassion is. So as we go through this, please don't turn this into a task list. Instead let Christ show you what true compassion is.

COMPASSION IS A VERB

25 Then an expert in the law stood up to test him, saying, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" **26** "What is written in the law?" he asked him. "How do you read it?"

27 He answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind," and "your neighbor as yourself."

28 "You've answered correctly," he told him. "Do this and you will live."

29 But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

30 Jesus took up the question and said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him, beat him up, and fled, leaving him half dead. **31** A priest happened to be going down that road. When he saw him, he passed by on the other side. **32** In the same way, a Levite, when he arrived at the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. **33** But a Samaritan on his journey came up to him, and when he saw the man, **HE HAD COMPASSION.** (So he acts) **34** He went over to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on olive oil and wine. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. **35** The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him. When I come back I'll reimburse you for whatever extra you spend.'

36 "Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?"

37 "The one who showed mercy to him," he said. Then Jesus told him, "Go and do the same."

Compassion is a verb

- **This is one of my favorite things about Jesus** - that compassion is so tightly knit to his heart. And he has always matched his love for us with action. God *shows* his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Compassion is a verb for our Lord, and it is a verb for us too.

WHAT ACTIVE COMPASSION LOOKS LIKE

COMPASSION IS MORE THAN KNOWLEDGE

It would be a whole lot easier if compassion was just the understanding of an issue. Like just knowing that your roommate is in a hard season of life, that someone in your Community Group is really struggling, or knowing that painful secret about your friend at school. But compassion isn't just knowledge - it's more.

26 *"What is written in the law?" he asked him. "How do you read it?"*

27 *He answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind," and "your neighbor as yourself."*

28 *"You've answered correctly," he told him.*

- **Got the answer right.** The expert got the answer right! He really nailed it. See, back in Mark 12 someone asked Jesus the same question... what is the most important command? And Jesus named these 2 commands together. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind; and love your neighbor as yourself. And the lawyer gives the very words of Jesus as his answer. He knows the word. And Jesus responds...

28 *"Do this and you will live."*

Jesus does not leave knowledge alone as an option

- **Do this and you will live.** Jesus doesn't just congratulate him on his perfect score. The purpose of his command isn't

just to be known, but to be obeyed. He tells him to take those commands and *do* them. **Compassion is more than knowledge, it's a verb.**

- **We are the lawyer.** Now, speaking of compassion... before we turn this expert in the law into some awful person, let's recognize that we really are him in a lot of ways. How many times have we walked away from church on Sunday mornings with all the knowledge we need to obey the Lord but somehow strategized our way out of obedience? How long have we settled for "progress" in the Christian life to merely be an increase in head knowledge while keeping our hands nice and clean?
- **There is more for us.** Jesus tells us in John 15 that obedience to him is for our joy! And I think he means it. There are joys just waiting for us as we act out the love of God.

COMPASSION DESTROYS DIVISION

I love what's happening here - there are deep social and religious dynamics at play in this parable. But Jesus reveals that true compassion is stronger than any force of division. There is no human distinction that should keep us from acting out the love of the gospel. And for a west Charlotte boy who is waking up to the depth of our city's need for boundaries to be broken, this is like a breath of fresh air.

30 *A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho (which means he was almost certainly a Jew) and fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him, beat him up, and fled, leaving him half dead.*

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31 *A priest happened to be going down that road* (the highest of the religious elite in the Jewish community - direct descendants of Aaron). *When he saw him, he passed by on the other side.*

32 *In the same way, a Levite* (another Jewish religious elite, but socially just below a priest - of the tribe of Levi, who served in the temple), *when he arrived at the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.*

33 *But a Samaritan on his journey came up to him, and when he saw the man, he had compassion.*

- **Samaritans and Jews** lived in hatred of each other, and it was a hate that ran centuries deep, a divide over both ethnicity and religion. John 4 puts it as simply as “Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.” Jesus has just set up a scene that is wrought with both religious and racial tension. And he shows us that the compassion of the Samaritan destroys both!

Compassion destroys racial divisions

- **We live in a racially divided city.** I am going to spend a few minutes here because I believe it is a blind spot for us. When Jesus told this parable, he did so in a context that was very open with racial division. But that’s not us... we live in a culture that claims to hate racial divisions, so the divide is

¹ <https://forcharlotte.org/>

² <https://forcharlotte.org/>

³ <https://www.charlotteobserver.com/opinion/editorials/article224981000.html>

much more subtle. And this is really important because when Jesus told this parable about a Samaritan showing compassion to a Jew that even the Jews themselves were not showing, the point was loud and clear that compassion destroys racial boundaries. We need to see that our culture is more similar to theirs than we would like to believe because we also need to see that we are in just as much need of the true Good Samaritan. Just because our water fountains don’t say “white” and “colored” anymore doesn’t mean we’ve moved passed the racial divide. It’s just taken another form.

- 125% of the geographic area of our city owns 75% of the city’s wealth. And that area is predominately white. It’s south Charlotte.
- ²In Charlotte, 36% of all Hispanic children live in poverty, while only 5% of all White children live in poverty.
- According to a January article in the Observer, black babies in Charlotte are 5 times more likely to die before the age of 1 than white babies. The national gap is closer to 2 to 1, not 5 to 1.³
- I’ll get personal here. My high school was only 11% white, but my friend group at that high school was about 95% white. Our cafeteria revealed the truth of the city: we are still divided.
- **This is not right.** God did not create separate classes of human; we did. And though slavery and Jim Crow America

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are dead and gone, we have to recognize that slavery and Jim Crow were never the real enemy... sin in the human heart has always been the enemy, which has long expressed itself through injustice and oppression. Sin is still alive and well today, which is why injustice and oppression are still alive and well.

- **We've had conversation about this before**, and for anyone who is interested I would suggest finding the conversation between Pastor Spence and Pastor Derrick DeLain on our website from July 2016⁴.
- **Let me talk to white people for a second.** Like I told you, I have been a contributor to this divide. And I have been blind to it. But God has graciously been opening my eyes, and he's primarily been doing it through his word in passages like this one and through conversation with friends of color. And something I'm wrestling with now is the fact that the hardest conversations I have about racial injustice are with other white people. Why are we so defensive when this comes up? If one of your friends were to approach you to tell you that you have hurt them without knowing it, you would at the very least listen to them patiently, and likely seek reconciliation. But we have people of color telling us that exact thing and our common response is to put up our guard. You may even have your guard up as you're hearing this now.
- **This is a gospel issue!** The issue of racial injustice and oppression, at its core, is a force of darkness in direct conflict with the way God created all of humanity in his image. Fighting to be the hands of Christ in this sphere is fighting for the glory of the Lord! God will get the glory he deserves, and he will get it through his church!

- **Thank you to people of color.** Now to my sisters and brothers of color — thank you for your patience and grace. Most of us will not experience what it's like to walk in a room that looks nothing like us every week and be lead by a bunch of people who don't look like us. You have shown us grace that only the Lord knows the depths of. And, as deeply as we can feel it, we are grateful for you. I want you to know that we are not okay with being a white church - we believe that the gospel call for more. We want to experience the joy of sharing in this mission with more of our sisters and brothers of color, and we will continue to fight for it. May God be glorified by a family of believers so diverse that it makes no earthly sense to a divided city!

Compassion destroys religious divisions

- **Jews and Gentiles.** No boundary can contain true compassion. Not race. And not religion. I want you to imagine the weight of Christ sharing this parable and making the hero of the story the only guy who isn't one of God's people. Everyone else in the story is a Jew, except for the Samaritan. Even the person who is half dead and in need.
- **God's heart is and always has been for *all* people.** For God so loved the *world* that he gave his only Son, and one day every tribe, tongue and nation will be in his presence singing his praises.

COMPASSION REQUIRES SACRIFICE

⁴ <http://mercycharlotte.com/sermons/a-conversation-on-racial-reconciliation/>

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If you didn't notice on our first time reading through the passage, the way the Samaritan served was crazy inconvenient. It cost him time, strength, money, and then ongoing mental capacity.

34 *He went over to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on olive oil and wine. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.*

Sacrifice is inconvenient

- **We want convenience.** I think most of us are happy to sacrifice when we've had it on the calendar for 2-3 weeks and we've had time to prepare. Or when sacrifice is a weekly rhythm that happens from this time to this time, something I am expecting. Where sacrifice becomes *really* difficult for us is when we face inconvenience. But maybe our convenience itself is what needs to be sacrificed.
- **Inconvenience is God's grace on us.** Here's the thing... there's a teaching that Jesus gives on money just a couple chapters ahead in Luke 12:34 that is actually true about our time, too. He says, "*Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*" Meaning, not only does where you put your resources display what you love, but the deeper truth is that where you put your resources *affects* what you love. And the inconvenience of my neighbor coming over to talk about something I don't really care about when I'm trying to feed my son dinner, the inconvenience of that person I know I need to share the gospel with when know it's going to make me late to my next thing, the inconvenience of taking a meal to that person across town... it is God's grace on me to change my heart by shaking up what I treasure - convenience.

35 *The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him. When I come back I'll reimburse you for whatever extra you spend.'*

Sacrifice is long-suffering

- **The next day, and when I come back.** Not only did the Samaritan stay with this man into the next day, but he gave the innkeeper money for days to come and said he would give him more when he comes back. He's shown the man that he's with him to stay, and has resolved already that he's coming back.
 - **Nic Colley.** This actually reminds me of a friend of mine here at Mercy named Nic Colley. He asks how you're doing, steps in to meet needs accordingly, and is still there praying for you and checking in months later.
 - **Modena Henderson.** Also reminds me of Modena Henderson, another member here. The Lord called Modena to Cuba for a short-term mission trip a couple years ago and she fell in love with the people she was serving. So she came home, has been learning Spanish and using that to serve the Spanish speakers in Charlotte ever since.

Compassion is a verb. And that means that it's more than knowledge, it destroys divisions, and it requires sacrifice. But our compassion is not born out of our own strength - it is born out of the love that we have received from Christ Jesus.

**JESUS IS THE EMBODIMENT
OF COMPASSION**

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There are many more beautiful aspects to compassion than what we got to look at today, but Christ is certainly the perfect embodiment of each aspect.

More Than Knowledge

- **Jesus knew us, loved us, and came for us.** Jesus is Immanuel, God With Us. Jeremiah says that he knew you before you were formed in your mother's womb. Ephesians tells us that he knew his people before the foundation of the world. Knowledge was never an issue for Christ. But in his knowledge of us, John 3 says that he so *loved* us that he *came* for us. The head, the heart, the hands.

Destroyed Division

- **Jesus left heaven for us.** John 6 says that Jesus came down from heaven. Philippians 2 says he existed in the form of God but, not counting that equality as something to be exploited, emptied himself and came to us as a man. There has never been a greater boundary broken in the name of love than the boundary of heaven.

Sacrifice

- **Jesus paid for our sins!** Can the people of God just take a second to celebrate like a people set free? If you're new to this church thing, let me tell you some good news.
 - **The gospel.** The book of Romans says that every single one of us was dead in our sins. The way pastor Charlie Dates puts it — we've all enjoyed our sin but after enjoying it we've all been left with a receipt, and we can't afford to pay it. But I know someone who can! Christ

loves us and came to pay for our sin, and he did it by dying on the very cross you and I deserved. But then he rose from the grave and told us we would never get hit with another receipt - that what he did was all we'll *ever* need for the payment of our sin. Now he calls us to live in relationship with him, doing his work here on earth.

WHAT WE DO

This brings us to what we're called to do with this parable. And I'm just going to let Jesus give us our next steps:

36 "Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?"

37a "The one who showed mercy to him," he said.

RECOGNIZE THE MERCY OF CHRIST

Jesus is the Good Samaritan

- **The goal of the parable.** Jesus makes the Samaritan the hero of this story and, any time Jesus makes a hero in a parable, you know that he is ultimately pointing to himself - the perfect embodiment of compassion. The purpose of this teaching is not for us to figure out which character we are. Jesus never asked the lawyer to name which one he identified with. He asked him to name which one proved to be a neighbor, and the answer was the Samaritan - the character representing Christ. If we are anybody in this parable, we are the person lying on the side of the road in need of saving. You were never meant to be the hero of this story, Jesus was. All you need to do is look at him and receive what he has done for you.

37b Then Jesus told him, "Go and do the same."

GO AND DO THE SAME

Show the compassion of Christ

- **Don't complicate it.** The call to the lawyer is the call to us, and it didn't come with complex strategy or tactics. That call was, "Go and do the same." The same of what? Christ was referring to the lawyer's response - that the one who proved to be a neighbor was the one who *showed mercy*. It was the Samaritan who *had compassion*. **Compassion is a verb**, friends. May we meet those in need and share in their sufferings with joy! May the head and the heart of the gospel move completely through our hands!
 - **Just act.** When you see a need and recognize a way you can serve, try just stepping into it. Sacrifice convenience and allow your plans to be interrupted. And if you're truly at a loss as to what needs are around you, pray and ask God to open your eyes to see them. He would love to answer that prayer. Just be prepared to respond.

REFLECTION

Maybe you've never received this compassion. Let me talk to you.

aren't into this whole Christianity thing, see the love of Christ for you.

STUFF I CUT

- **Do my neighbors see my love?** I've said for most of my life that I love west Charlotte and the people of west Charlotte, but I've had to reckon with the fact that my neighbors may not be able to affirm that claim.
- **What happens when we don't do what we say.** A danger here is that when we don't do what we say, even what we say begins to lose its truth. Like a man who tells his wife everyday that he loves her but never serves her. It's not just that his statement of love starts to sound like a lie to his wife, it actually becomes a lie in his own heart. He will slowly but surely stop loving her as he stops serving her. But serving his wife with his hands will stoke the flames of love in his heart. The affections of the heart are completed by the work of the hands, and the work of the hands feeds the affections of the heart.
- **The goal of the sermon.** The goal of this sermon is for you to see and be compelled by the heart of Jesus. The conversation we're about to read is one between a person who is like us in a lot of ways, and the Savior of the world. Jesus has compassion for you coursing through his heart so strongly that it *had* to come out through the work of his hands, and those hands were nailed to a cross so that our hands can be lifted up today in freedom and in worship. See and savor Jesus today. Even you who are here today and

25 Then an expert in the law stood up to test him, saying, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Knowledge without humility is dangerous

- **This was a test.** This whole conversation begins in pride - a guy who knows a lot about the word of God but apparently doesn't know much about the heart of God. He's not asking a question out of genuine interest, just trying to set himself up to look good. To use our head, heart, hands idea — this is the danger of the head without the heart. It reminds me of what the apostle Paul writes to some know-it-alls in 1 Corinthians 8:1, that knowledge puffs up but love builds up. But the Lord meets him with grace.
- **Non-Christian, please forgive us.** We need to ask the forgiveness of you non-Christians who have been around a lot of us Christians who are no more than "experts in the law" who lack compassion and humility. Most of us really do want to show Jesus to our world, but all of us have fallen short in one way or another. Let the rest of this passage be a display to you of what Christ is actually like.

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- **This isn't an accident.** The truth is, our city did not end up this way by accident. What we see now is the result of centuries of injustice — from the kidnapping of a people group 400 years ago for slave labor, to gentrification and pricing out of that same people group today. And both in the name of business.
- **We need compassion!** Compassion is a verb, y'all. Compassion means sharing in each other's sufferings. And we need compassion that destroys racial divisions! We need a love that displays the power of the gospel to a divided city! And as we act in compassion, Christ will increase compassion in our hearts. The work of the hands feeds the affections of the heart.
- **White privilege.** I'd like to talk to my white sisters and brothers for a second. I recognize that some of these things can be difficult to hear, but I want to plead with you to ask God to open your eyes. A lot of us are resistant to the idea of our privilege, and pretty much all of us are blind to it. A lot of us feel like either we, our parents or our grandparents earned what we have. But I think that is shortsighted.
 - **Moving sidewalk.** Our ancestors have created a scenario where we as white people get to move through life in America on a moving sidewalk, while our sisters and brothers of color have to work twice as hard just to keep pace. Now privilege isn't just financial privilege... it's the fact that when we walk in a room, there are assumptions made about who we are that are *not* made about people of color. That truly is privilege and, though you didn't create that moving sidewalk yourself, choosing to use it for your own gain is perpetuating the cycle. The question we are left with is not "What should we do *about* our privilege?" The question is "What should we do *with* our privilege?" The answer... fight for the oppressed!

Fight for the justice of people of color in our city! Lest we be the experts of the law that Jesus warned in Luke 11:42... *But woe to you Pharisees! You give a tenth of mint, rue, and every kind of herb, and you bypass justice and love for God. These things you should have done without neglecting the others.*

- **Something you can apply today.** I know that can be daunting. Something you can do today that is simple to help you gain vision. Make a list of your influences... authors you currently read, preachers you listen to, friends you spend time with, people you seek counsel from. How many of those are people of color? Have you inadvertently surrounded yourself with others who are blind to deep racial injustice and oppression? The blind will lead the blind into a bottomless pit - how desperately we need the influence of people of color!

You will be tempted to ask "Who is my neighbor?"

- **Wrong question for the lawyer, wrong question for us.** Did you notice that Jesus didn't really answer the question that the lawyer brought to him? The lawyer asked "Who is my neighbor?" The more appropriate parable would have been 3 men in need lying on the side of the road and a character choosing which one to serve. But Christ responded to him with the story of how 3 characters responded to one man in need. In this he was correcting the lawyer's question from "Who is my neighbor?" to "How can I be a neighbor?"
- **You know the answer.** The truth is, you already know who your neighbor is. It's your literal neighbor, it's the oppressed of our city, it's your family, it's the people in your community group, it's your closest friend, it's the person who hurt you,

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it's the person you just don't really like that much... your neighbor is anyone in need. And we are all in need - some are just more aware of it in seasons.

- **Head, heart, hands.** Knowing God leads to loving God, which leads to displaying that love. And the beauty of God's design is that he uses the active display of that love to make us love him even more. The affections of the heart are completed by the work of the hands, and the work of the hands feed the affections of the heart.