

# An Incorruptible Compassion

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## Introduction

### The Text

“<sup>31</sup> And taking the twelve, he said to them, ‘See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. <sup>32</sup> For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. <sup>33</sup> And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise.’” (Luke 18:31–33)

### We Bend Inward under Personal Burden

- A. Let me ask you something: What happens to your attitude and your relationships when you have a lot going on personally?
  - 1. Maybe you’ve got a deadline approaching at work and your job is on the line.
  - 2. Maybe the ladies in the neighborhood have been talking behind your back and it’s just eating you up.
  - 3. Maybe you’re waiting for the test results to come back from the lab. “The doctor said they should’ve been here by now, what’s the hold up?! I’ve got to know is it malignant or not?!”
    - a. Whatever the case, when you’re burdened with a lot personally, what happens to your attitude and your relationships?
- B. I’ll tell you what happens to me. I start to bend inward with self-concern. I get anxious. I get angry. I’m short with my wife. I snap at my kids. I grumble at the person going slow in the fast lane. I struggle to think of anyone but myself.
  - 1. “Don’t you all know what I’m going through? I don’t have time to think about you. I’m too busy thinking about me!”

### But Jesus Bends Outward

- A. In the text I just read, this is now the third and final time that Christ predicts His impending death in Jerusalem. It’s coming now—just days away.
  - 1. You want to talk about a lot going on personally? How about being mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon and flogged and killed?! And all of this by the very hands of the people you’ve come to save! Does that sound like heavy burden to bear?!
- B. And yet here’s the thing that captivated me about Jesus at this point: Even with the shadow of the cross thick and dark as night upon Him, even in the throes of such personal anguish and agony, as we follow Him through the last few days of His life, it seems, all He can think about...is you and me. Not Himself, but others.

1. Indeed, He saves some of His most splendid acts of compassion for these the last brutal days of His life.
- C. We're going to follow Christ in Luke's gospel here, and I'm going to give us four snapshots of His compassion. We're going to see His compassion for: (1) The Physically Broken; (2) The Socially Outcast; (3) The Spiritually Backsliding; and (4) The Bitter Enemy.

## (1) Compassion for the Physically Broken (Luke 18:35-43a)

### Jesus and the Blind Man

- A. Immediately following the announcement of His impending death in vv. 31-33, Jesus is brought straightaway to face the desperate need of another: “<sup>35</sup> As he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. <sup>36</sup> And hearing a crowd going by, he inquired what this meant. <sup>37</sup> They told him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.” <sup>38</sup> And he cried out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” <sup>39</sup> And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” <sup>40</sup> And Jesus stopped and commanded him to be brought to him. And when [the blind man] came near, [Jesus] asked him, <sup>41</sup> “What do you want me to do for you?” He said, “Lord, let me recover my sight.” <sup>42</sup> And Jesus said to him, “Recover your sight; your faith has made you well.” <sup>43</sup> And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him, glorifying God . . .” (Luke 18:35–43a).
- B. There is no bending inward for the Savior here—“I've got more important things to worry about, blind man. Do you know the burden I am carrying? Quiet with your petty concerns!”
1. No! There is compassion in the heart of our Savior. “Bring Him here. I want to talk to Him. I want to understand what He's going through. And I want to heal Him.”
- C. Even with the shadow of the cross thick and dark as night upon Him, Jesus has compassion for the physically broken.

### Jesus and Us

- A. Anybody physically broken in this room? Anybody's body breaking down?
1. There's a lovely lady in our church who just had to pack up and leave town last week because the doctors found cancer in her daughter's breasts. And her daughter just had a little baby. So now she's got a daughter in the cancer ward and a newborn grandbaby to care for.
    - a. And we wonder, does Jesus have compassion for them? You better believe it.
- B. I'm one of those crazy Christians that still believes God can heal the sick. I've seen it happen with my own eyes.
1. But, whether He chooses to heal us now or not, He will heal us in the end—when He “will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body” (Phil 3:21).

- a. Cancer will not have the last word over the Christian. Christ will!
- C. If you need healing this morning, don't leave this place without letting us pray for you. Christ has compassion for the physically broken.

## (2) Compassion for the Socially Outcast (Luke 19:1-10)

### Jesus and Zacchaeus

- A. Returning to Luke, the narrative moves immediately forward from this blind man to yet another individual in need: “<sup>1</sup> He entered Jericho and was passing through. <sup>2</sup> And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. <sup>3</sup> And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. <sup>4</sup> So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. <sup>5</sup> And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.” <sup>6</sup> So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. <sup>7</sup> And when they saw it, they all grumbled, “He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.” <sup>8</sup> And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.” <sup>9</sup> And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. <sup>10</sup> For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:1–10).
- B. Upon first read of this story, we might think, “Ah, finally. Jesus is showing some self-concern here.”
  - 1. It sounds like Jesus is asking Zacchaeus to take care of Him doesn't it: “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today” (v. 5). “I'm coming over, stock your fridge, make up a bed. I want someone to take care of Me for a change!”
    - a. But that's not what Jesus is doing here. He's not looking to get something to Zacchaeus. He's looking to give something to Zacchaeus: “Today salvation has come to this house” (v. 9). “That's why I'm here, to save you! '[T]o seek and to save the lost' (v. 10).”
- C. I don't have time to review for us here how Jewish tax collectors were perceived in Israel during this time, but suffice it to say they were social outcasts.
  - 1. They collected taxes from their own people on behalf of Rome. So they were seen as collaborating with the enemy, men who had turned on their own countrymen, men without spines or souls. They traded their friends and family to get a few extra bucks.
    - a. And Zacchaeus, as a “chief tax collector”, we are told, is “rich” (v. 3). So he's got a lot of money, but not a lot of friends.
- D. That's why when people see Jesus hanging with him, they're torn up about it: “What's Jesus doing in the house of a traitor, a sinner, an outcast?!”

1. He's showing compassion! Even with the shadow of the cross thick and dark as night upon Him, Jesus has compassion for the socially outcast.

## Jesus and Us

- A. We can be outcasts socially for many different reasons. Sometimes it's our own fault, sometimes it's not. Sometimes it's just because we're socially awkward, or we don't look like everyone else, or whatever.
- B. Maybe you've been bullied since grade school. I remember those kids. It was horrible. If you don't believe in original sin, just watch little kids on the playground. They find the "weakest links" and they just lay into them.
  1. Maybe that was you. Maybe that's your childhood. Maybe it still feels this way for you in the office, or in the neighborhood, or, God forbid, even in the church.
- C. Have you ever walked into a church and felt like an outcast? I don't wear the right clothes, I don't say the right words, I don't know why everyone's raising their hands during the music, I don't belong here.
  1. Well that's not how it should be. We get it backwards! Do you know who felt like the outcast around Jesus? The church people, the religious, the self-righteous, the Pharisees.
    - a. Meanwhile it's the awkward, the sinful, the social rejects who feel right at home.
- D. If you feel like an outcast this morning, it's my prayer that you find a home here with God's people. Christ has compassion for the socially outcast.

## (3) Compassion for the Spiritually Backsliding (Luke 22:31-34)

### Jesus and Peter

- A. When we're just going through it, where do we usually look for support? Our inner circle, right? Don't you have those friends that you can call on when life gets rough? Maybe it's your parent or your spouse. But you have those people you turn to.
  1. Who would those people be for Jesus? His apostles, right? The twelve.
- B. Well, as we follow the narrative in Luke, a few days have passed, and it's now Thursday of Holy Week. Jesus has just celebrated the Passover with these twelve, and now He's walking with them, it seems, towards the Mount of Olives. And He has an announcement to make: "Tonight, you're all going to fall away" (Matt 26:31).
  1. But Peter responds: "I will never do such a thing!" And then Jesus says this: "<sup>31</sup> Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, <sup>32</sup> but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."<sup>33</sup> Peter said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to

death.”<sup>34</sup> Jesus said, “I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me” (Luke 22:31–34).

- C. Don’t you just love that?! If I’m Christ in this moment, I’m bitter, I’m resentful. “I don’t even want to talk to you Peter. I’m laying down my life for you and you can’t even stand up for me before a little servant girl?!”
  - 1. But there’s not even a hint of such a thing in our Savior’s words here. Just compassion. “I’m praying for you brother. I’m going to restore you brother. I still love you.”
- D. Even with the shadow of the cross thick and dark as night upon Him, Jesus has compassion for the spiritually backsliding.

## Jesus and Us

- A. Anyone in this room plagued with guilt this morning? Anyone in this room feel like you’ve all but denied the Lord with the way you’ve been living—the past week, the past month, the past year?
  - 1. Anyone else experience the shame of Peter? We’re told in [Luke 22:62](#), that after his third denial, and the crow of the rooster, “[he went out and wept bitterly.](#)”
    - a. Have you been there? Are you there right now? “How could I have done such a thing? Will the Lord ever take me back?!”
- B. Yes! It should not escape our notice that Peter is the first person Jesus appears to after the resurrection ([Luke 24:34](#); [1 Cor 15:5](#)). He couldn’t wait to restore His friend!
  - 1. Jesus isn’t put off by your sin, by your backsliding. He’s pursuing you in it and extending compassion, even now. Christ has compassion for the spiritually backsliding.

## (4) Compassion for the Bitter Enemy (Luke 23:39-43)

### Jesus and the Criminal

- A. If we find loving friends to be tough in times of personal stress and burden, how about loving enemies?
- B. There are so many places I wanted to take you for this one.
  - 1. We could’ve gone to that scene where, in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus heals the ear of one of the men who’s come to seize Him. Peter, trying to protect Jesus, cuts this guy’s ear off, and Jesus says, “Enough!” And He touches the dude’s ear and heals Him ([Luke 22:51](#)). Compassion for a bitter enemy.
  - 2. Or what about the cry of compassion from the cross: “[Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do](#)” ([Luke 23:34](#)). Are you serious? Forgive the guys who just drove nails through my hands and feet? His love is out of this world.

- C. But I wanted to camp on [Luke 23:39-43](#) for a moment. [We remember that there were two criminals crucified on either side of the Messiah]: “<sup>39</sup> One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!”<sup>40</sup> But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?”<sup>41</sup> And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.”<sup>42</sup> And he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”<sup>43</sup> And [Jesus] said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:39–43).
- D. From what we know, it seems likely that this criminal had lived his entire life in opposition to the things of God. [Matthew](#) even indicates that, before this conversation recorded in Luke, this very criminal had been mocking Jesus along with the other (27:44).
1. But in these last moments of his life, something shifted, something changed. And he cries out for mercy: “Jesus, remember me . . .” (v. 42).
- E. How does Jesus respond? “Remember you? O I’ll remember you. I’ll remember you as the thief, the sinner, the blasphemer, the enemy.”
1. No. He doesn’t say that, does He. Instead, Christ, moved with compassion for this man, invites him to be with Him where He is...forever: “[T]oday you will be with me in paradise” (v. 43).
    - a. There’s no reservation here. He gives this man everything! Don’t you see?! That’s why Jesus is on the cross in the first place. So that His enemies might become friends.
- F. Even with the shadow of the cross thick and dark as night upon Him, Jesus has compassion for the bitter enemy.

## Jesus and Us

- A. Maybe you have been an enemy, a stubborn opponent of God, your whole life. You’re only here because someone dragged you. “Let Easter be about bunnies and eggs for all I care, but don’t you talk to me about the crucifixion and resurrection. It’s ridiculous!”
1. And then suddenly you saw Him—somewhere between the blind man, Zacchaeus, Peter, and this criminal.
    - a. There’s something compelling about His compassion. It makes criminals repent and Centurions praise: “Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, ‘Certainly this man was innocent!’” (Luke 23:47).
- B. “<sup>7</sup> Today, if you hear his voice, <sup>8</sup> do not harden your heart” (Heb 3:7–8). Turn from your sin and cry out with the criminal: “Remember me. In mercy, remember me.”
1. And He will. Christ has compassion for the bitter enemy.

# Conclusion

## The Resurrection?!

- A. But you say: “Wait a minute, Nick. This is Easter Sunday. Aren’t you going to talk about the resurrection?!” Yes. Right now.
- B. You see, there’s a deep logic to Christ’s compassion in all of this. When we ask the question: “How, in the midst of such personal turmoil, was He able to remain so others-focused, so compassionate, so caring?”
  - 1. The answer was, in fact, hinted at back in the very first text we read.
    - a. Because, you see, there Jesus didn’t just foretell His suffering and death. He foretold His resurrection: “<sup>32</sup> [H]e will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon.<sup>33</sup> And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise” (Luke 18:32–33).
- C. The Son knew that no matter what anguish and agony He would face at the cross, glory was waiting for Him on the other side. He knew that His Father would ultimately provide for Him, protect Him, vindicate Him, raise Him up.
  - 1. That’s why He could rebuke Peter for picking up the sword. That’s why He would resist calling down legions of angels. He knew that His Father was caring for Him, so He could give His life to caring for others.
- D. But the wonderful thing about the resurrection of Christ is that it does more than just enable His compassion for us in the last days of His life, it establishes His compassion for us unto all of eternity.
  - 1. He has been raised never to die again. The author of [Hebrews](#) tells us that our High priest in the heavenlies now has an “[indestructible life](#)” (7:16). And as such: “[He always lives to make intercession for \[us\]](#)” (7:25).
    - a. His compassion is as incorruptible as His person.
- E. He’s not dead and decayed in an unmarked tomb somewhere, He’s alive, and He’s here this morning extending this same mercy and compassion to you. O I beg of you, receive it!