



The Compassion of the Son of Man Luke 7

Introduction

The compassion of Jesus is highlighted throughout Luke Chapter 7: healing the centurion's servant, stopping a funeral procession to raise a dead youth, and giving a most moving tribute to John the Baptist, His imprisoned cousin. The chapter closes with the touching and irrefutable defense of a sinful woman who loved much, and the rebuke of a hard-hearted Pharisee who loved little. In Luke Chapter 8, the merciful God of the Old Testament is affirmed through the compassionate Son of Man in the New Testament. Do we, who are His followers, reflect His compassion?

For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses (Hebrews 4:15).

Thy loving kindness is better than life (Psalm 63:3).

Outline of Luke 7

- I. Compassion for the Centurion and His Servant - Luke 7:1-10
- II. Compassion for the Widow and Her Son - Luke 7:11-17
- III. Compassion for John the Baptist - Luke 7:18-36
- IV. Compassion for the Sinful Woman - Luke 7:37-50

I. Compassion for the Centurion and His Servant - Luke 7:1-10

A. Crisis in Capernaum - Luke 7:1-2

After teaching on the mountain, Jesus returned to Capernaum where a centurion, a Roman officer in command of one hundred soldiers, had a servant *who was dear to him* and terminally ill.

B. The Centurion - Luke 7:3-8

1. Diplomatic

When the Gentile centurion heard about Jesus, he displayed humble faith in His power to heal. He was also diplomatic, appealing to the Jewish elders, initially asking them to approach Jesus with a request on his behalf. Although he represented the Roman Empire, which ruled over these Jews in an occupied nation, he demonstrated respect for both the elders and Jesus. This was consistent with the centurion's nature because Luke tells us that he loved the Jewish nation and had

helped build their synagogue (7:5). The floor of a first century synagogue may be seen today in Capernaum. It could be the very same one.

2. Generous

The elders willingly complied because of the love and generosity the centurion had shown. Centurions were chosen partly for their character as leaders of men. All the centurions mentioned in the New Testament are honorable men. The centurion at the cross, in charge of the crucifixion, evidently became a believer (Mark 15:39; Luke 23:47). Cornelius, the centurion in Acts 10, was converted under Peter's preaching to become the first Gentile to receive the Holy Spirit.

3. Tender-hearted - "He loves our nation"

The Romans were famous for their tough militarism. This man was sympathetic and tender toward the oppressed nation. He also cared enough about his servant, *who was dear to him* (7:2), to send to Jesus in an attempt to heal him. When someone you care about is ill do you go immediately to Jesus and humbly ask Him to heal?

4. Humble and considerate

Jesus went with them. And when He was already not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to Him, saying to Him, "Lord, do not trouble Yourself for I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof." The centurion explained that he understood authority for he could order people to come and they came, to go and they went. He fully believed all Jesus had to do was say the word for his servant to be healed.

C. Jesus *marveled at him* - Luke 7:9-10

Is it not amazing to read of the Lord's amazement? Can God be surprised? Here is evidence of Jesus' humanity. Having laid aside His attributes of deity, He came in the likeness of sinful man (Philippians 2:6-8). He was so genuinely surprised and thoroughly pleased that He turned to the crowd around Him and said, "*I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel.*" We do not know that He said anything to the centurion's friends, but when they returned to his house, the servant was well. The merciful centurion had received mercy (Luke 6:36).

In what ways are you like the centurion? What are you doing for others that commends your character?

II. Compassion for the Widow and Her Son - Luke 7:11-17

A. A Funeral in Nain - Luke 7:11-12

The next day Jesus walked to Nain, a nearby city. As always, He was followed by a crowd and accompanied by His disciples. A funeral procession came toward them. The dead person was a youth and his mother was a widow. This was her only son. Much of the city turned out to support her, but her grief was obvious.

B. The Lord's Compassion - Luke 7:13

When the Lord saw her, He spoke to her with compassion, *"Do not weep."* On numerous occasions Jesus was moved with compassion; for the leper (Mark 1:41); for the leaderless multitudes (Matthew 9:36; Mark 6:34); at the feeding of the five thousand (Matthew 14:14) and the four thousand (Matthew 15:32); on the two blind men in Jericho (Matthew 20:34); also in Matthew 18:27; Mark 8:2, 9:22; Luke 10:33. He has compassion on us as well, *As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him* (Psalm 103:13). A father's compassion is illustrated in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:20).

"The verb translated "compassion" is very strong. It means "to be moved as to one's inwards". "To yearn with compassion", is frequently recorded of Christ towards the multitude and towards individual sufferers" (Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, W.E. Vine). Literally "compassion" means "to feel along with someone", as Jesus Christ felt along with the widow and hurt for her.

Who needs your compassion today?

C. Raising the Dead - Luke 7:14-17

1. The miracle

Among miracles, the most spectacular and difficult to refute is surely the raising of the dead, such as is found here. It is without natural explanation, a totally supernatural work of the power of God. Christ's mercy is never more evident. Jesus touched the coffin, probably a plain wooden box, although Edersheim calls it a wicker basket (Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Alfred Edersheim). He spoke to the corpse, *"Young man, I say to you arise,"* and *he who was dead sat up and began to speak*. The account of this miracle is found only in Luke and makes one wonder if Luke interviewed the very man who had been raised.

As in the case of Lazarus, it was good that Jesus specified His command to the young man or perhaps all the dead would have risen (John 5:25).

2. Life from the dead

Jesus handed the son over to his mother, giving them a new life together. Even so, we are dead in our trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1). Then Jesus comes and raises us to new life (John 5:21). We are given eternal life by believing in Him (John 5:24; 1 John 5:12). Have you been raised from the deadness of your old life? Listen to God's voice in His Word and do what He says and you too will have eternal life.

III. Compassion for John the Baptist - Luke 7:18-36

A. John's Question Concerning Jesus - Luke 7:18-20

1. From prison - 7:18

Matthew tells us that John, imprisoned by Herod Antipas, heard about the works of Christ (Matthew 11:2). Why did Jesus not help John as He was helping so many others?

2. John's question - 7:19-20

"Are you the Coming One or do we look for another?" John may have wondered why Jesus, with power over disease and death, did not choose to free him. Did He have power but no compassion, or compassion but no power? This is a classic dilemma. Why does an all-powerful and loving God not fulfill all our yearnings? Why does He not stop poverty and war or reveal a cure for cancer? Why does He not use His power to make us happy? John wanted to know if the One he baptized was truly the Messiah. Had he succeeded in his work to prepare the way for the Lord (Luke 1:17, 76)?

Do you ever think you have thrown your life away to serve God, or that the gospel is just too good to be true? Listen to Jesus' answer to John.

B. Jesus' Answer To John - Luke 7:21-23

There in front of John's disciples, Jesus turned to the crowd and healed, cured, opened eyes, and expelled demons. Then He said, *"Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me."* The last sentence seems to be a mild rebuke. Actually, Jesus was telling John to "hang in there". The works proved who Jesus was. John's race was almost run and this was no time to stumble or doubt. Has your life become difficult? Wait on the Lord and you will renew your strength, mount up with wings as eagles, run and not be weary, walk and not faint (Isaiah 40:31).

C. Jesus' Testimony Concerning John - Luke 7:24-35

1. Three questions to the crowd - 7:24-26

After John's friends and disciples had departed, Jesus addressed the crowd who had witnessed all He had said and done. Speaking of John, He asked them three questions for self-evaluation.

a. First question

"What did you go out into the wilderness to see, a reed shaken by the wind?" We would say "a wimp".

b. Second question

"What did you go out to see, a man clothed in soft garments?" We would say "effeminate", or "a softy".

c. Third question

"But what did you go out to see? A prophet?" Yes, and John was even *"more than a prophet"*.

2. "More than a prophet" - 7:27-28

a. Prophesied in Scripture

Jesus said John was the one foretold in Scripture. *Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me* (Malachi 3:1; Isaiah 40:3).

b. Greatest person until then

"Among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist. Yet the least one in the kingdom of God is greater than he is" (literal Greek, Pocket Interlinear New Testament, Jay P. Green, Sr., editor). How can the least in God's kingdom, such as you and me, be greater than the greatest prophet? "John was greater than the Old Testament prophets because he actually saw with his own eyes and personally participated in the fulfillment of what they only prophesied" (The MacArthur Bible Commentary, John MacArthur). But believers since the cross and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Luke 17:21; Acts 2:1-4, 11:16) are still greater because we experience the fullness of the kingdom of God which John saw only in a shadowy form.

3. A watershed of society - 7:29-30

When all the people heard Him, even the tax collectors justified God, having been baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.

The audience immediately fell into two groups. First, there were the thankful ones who had been baptized by John and agreed with Jesus. Then there were the critics who rejected God's will and had not been baptized by John. Do you agree with the words of Jesus? Are you grateful to be least in the kingdom and on His side?

D. Jesus' Challenge to the Fickle Crowd - Luke 7:31-35

Aware of the two groups and thinking of a crowd's ability to blow hot and cold, Jesus added, *"To what then shall I liken this generation?"* People are like children at play. One minute they want one kind of game and soon they want another. A crowd is never satisfied. Abraham Lincoln may have remembered this when he said, "You cannot please all the people all of the time."

John abstained from most foods and was called demonic. Jesus enjoyed food and drink and was called a glutton and a drinker. Are you selective and critical of Christian workers, their styles, and personalities? Or can you accept the differences of true servants of God?

IV. Compassion for the Sinful Woman - Luke 7:37-50

A. In a Pharisee's Home - Luke 7:36-40

1. The dinner - 7:36

A Pharisee invited Jesus to his home for dinner and He accepted. The host was probably pleased with himself, feeling very tolerant and open-minded.

2. The sinner - 7:37-38

When Jesus and others were seated and eating, *a woman in the city*, "of ill repute" we might say, entered. She knew Jesus was a guest in the Pharisee's house and brought an alabaster jar of perfume. She did something that might have been shocking, or at least greatly surprising. Kneeling at His feet, she wept, washing His feet with her tears. She used her hair to wipe the tears from His feet, kissing them and anointing them with fragrant oil.

3. The Pharisee - Luke 7:39

Not only did the woman seem to know her way into the house of Simon the Pharisee, but Simon also knew who she was. Simon thought, *"This man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner."* But Jesus was speaking to him, *"Simon, I have something to say to you."* Simon replied, *"Teacher, say it."* Jesus proceeded to tell a story.

B. Parable of The Two Debtors - Luke 7:40-43

1. The forgiving creditor

A creditor lent money to two people. One owed ten times more than the other. Neither could repay, so he generously forgave them both.

2. The point of the parable

James Montgomery Boice calls this the parable "On Being Thankful" (The Parables of Jesus). The point of the parable is: which of them will love him more? Simon gave the right answer but missed the application to himself. Jesus acknowledged that Simon gave the right answer and proceeded to apply it to him and the woman. Are you like Simon, content with the right answers but without application to your life?

C. Application of the Parable - Luke 7:44-50

1. To Simon

Boice says, "The man was not as open as his invitation would lead us to suspect." Customarily, a guest's feet were washed when he entered a house. But Simon had failed to wash Jesus' feet. He seems to have been assessing Jesus and waiting to see if He was worthy

of that honor. Simon had not done even the minimum. Boice continues, "The story shows Simon to be skeptical. He was going to be a judge of Christ's character and calling." Jesus further compared Simon to the woman, "*You gave me no kiss....you did not anoint My head with oil.*" Simon was like the debtor who loved little.

2. To the woman

Jesus overlooked nothing the woman did for Him. "*She has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. This woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in and has anointed My feet with fragrant oil.*" She was like the debtor who loved much.

Jesus pronounced her sins forgiven, recognized her saving faith, and told her to go in peace: peace with God and peace with people.

Applications

1. Like the centurion, do you believe that Jesus has authority to do anything? What situation in your home needs to be brought to Him today in quiet faith?
2. Like the woman who washed Jesus' feet, are you humble and grateful for what He has done for you? How does your life show it?

QUESTIONS

Questions are based on the New King James Version of the Bible.

DAY ONE: Read Lesson notes and references.

1. Which illustrations of the Lord's compassion touched you most? Give reasons for your answer.
2. a. ♥(Heart Question) In what way have you felt the Lord's compassion?

b. ♥(Heart Question) How have you experienced compassion from others?
3. Do you think compassion is a sign of weakness or strength? Give a reason for your answer.

DAY TWO: Read Luke 8:1-15. See also Matthew 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-20.

4. Who went with Jesus on this second preaching tour?
5. According to Matthew and Mark, where did Jesus tell the parable of the sower?
6. a. List the four soils into which the seed fell and give the result.

<u>Kinds of Soil</u> (Give verse)	<u>Result</u> (Give verse)
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b. Which kinds of soil have you been? Which are you now?
7. a. How did Jesus challenge the crowd in Luke 8:8?

b. What do you think this means?

DAY THREE: Read Luke 8:16-25; Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41.

8. ? (Thought Question) What do you think Luke 8:16-18 has to say about our use of whatever Bible knowledge we have?
9. a. Who was prevented from seeing Jesus because of the crowd?

b. How do you qualify to be as close to Jesus as a family member?

10. a. What happened during an ordinary boat ride across the lake?

b. What details are given only by Matthew or Mark?

c. What did the disciples say to Jesus in all three gospels?

d. What did Jesus say to them?

e. What did He do to the storm?

f. ♥(Heart Question) What “storm” do you have in your life today? How will you handle it?
Will you tell Jesus about it and trust Him to take care of it?

DAY FOUR: Read Luke 8:26-39; Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20.

11. Find Gadara (or Gerasa) to the east of Galilee on a map? Where is it located?

12. From Luke 8:26-29 and Mark 5:1-5, list some traits of the demon-possessed man.

13. a. What did Jesus do for the man?

b. What action from the man was contrary to what the demon said (Mark 5:6-7)?

c. ? (Thought Question) Do you think people’s actions are determined by heredity, environment, health, and education, or are people able to choose to think and act independently of these things?

14. a. How did the demon-possessed pigs behave?

b. How did the man’s behavior change after meeting Jesus?

c. How did the townspeople behave?

DAY FIVE: Read Luke 8:40-48; Matthew 9:18-22; Mark 5:21-34.

15. a. Where was Jesus going when He was interrupted?

b. What was the interruption?
16. a. What did Jesus say to the disciples?

b. What did He say to the woman?

c. What action revealed her faith?
17. Do Matthew or Mark add anything that interests you? If so, what is it?

DAY SIX: Read Luke 8:49-56; Matthew 9:23-26; Mark 5:35-43.

18. While the woman was being healed, what happened to the girl?
19. a. What did Jesus say about her?

b. Who went in with Jesus?

c. How does Dr. Luke describe the miracle of the girl being revived?
20. In Luke 8, who had faith? Who was rebuked for little faith?