

When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns.¹⁴ When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

¹⁵ As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a remote place, and it’s already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food.”

¹⁶ Jesus replied, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.”

¹⁷ “We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish,” they answered.

¹⁸ “Bring them here to me,” he said. ¹⁹ And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. ²⁰ They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. ²¹ The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children. (NIV 84)

Theme: Trust in your Compassionate and Powerful Lord.

1. He has mercy on you.
2. He is able to help you.

You see it played out again and again in movies. A character gets into some sort of situation and it seems all hope is lost. Maybe a guy is surrounded during a shootout, or is caught behind traffic during a car chase; perhaps a woman gets diagnosed with terminal cancer, or a family loses their home to foreclosure. It seems as if all hope is lost. But then it isn't. At the last possible moment, a second shooter shows up, He finds a way to derive eon the sidewalk, doctors find a cure—somehow everything turns out well in the end. When you are watching a movie you expect this to happen. Everything will turn out alright in the end; the only thing that is a mystery is how it's going to come about. You see it so often, that you become immune to it. Until it happens to you or a someone you love. You get into some predicament and it seems as if all hope is lost.

So today you learn to trust in your compassionate and powerful Lord. For he has mercy on you and he is able to help you.

Jesus just found out about the death of his cousin and forerunner, John the Baptist. He wanted to be alone to pray to God. So he left with his disciples and got into a boat. They were going to the other side—the east side of the Sea of Galilee. It was somewhere in the vicinity of the town, Bethsaida. They were in a secluded and remote place. But they weren't alone. A large crowd followed Jesus on foot. Word spread that Jesus was on the Sea of Galilee, so people from the surrounding villages went out to find Jesus. Soon a large crowd formed—5000 thousand men, not counting women and children.

Jesus knew the predicament they were in. He understood the effects of sin in their lives. And his heart went out to them. We read, **When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them.** They were sheep without a shepherd. They longed for someone to show them the truth. Their sins weighed down on them. They needed to hear about the free forgiveness of sins and eternal life given to them by a loving and gracious God. And he saw the effects of sin elsewhere. He saw the sick, the lame, the diseased. And his heart went out to them. How could it not. They were helpless. They were hopeless. In their minds, all hope was gone. And on their own, it would have been. But Jesus was able to help them. So he had mercy and compassion on them. He didn't just look the other way. He didn't push them away in their need. But he welcomed them.

Jesus feels the same way about us. For we too are helpless. We too are hopeless. We were conceived in sin. Born as enemies of God. We could do nothing but sin. We couldn't and still can't do anything to save ourselves. So his heart goes out to us. He knows that we deserve nothing but eternal punishment. He realized and helpless and hopeless we are to save ourselves.

He not only knows our sin, but he knows the effects of sin in our lives as well. He sees the pain. He knows when we are struck with cancer, when a loved one is in a serious accident, or when everything seems to be crumbling all around you. He knows what it is like to live in this sin-filled world. He understands what you are going through. He

lived on this earth for more than 30 years, just like one of us, and he empathizes with us. So his heart goes out to us. He has compassion on us just like he had compassion on the crowd of people.

But Jesus having compassion on us would be absolutely worthless if it didn't lead him to do anything. But it did. He doesn't just have compassion on us when we are hopeless, but he also takes care of our every need.

It's just three words at the end of verse 13. They are easy to miss or just glance over. **Healed their sick.** The he is understood—**he had compassion on them and healed their sick.** He saw the people in the crowd who were sick, crippled, and diseased. So he healed them. He didn't heal them by giving them some sort of medicine. He Didn't perform surgery on them either. No he used his divine power—doing something no other human could do. He performed miracle after miracle for them. They thought all hope was lost. They thought they would die from their sicknesses or suffer for the rest of their lives from their diseases. But Christ had compassion on them. And he used his divine power to heal them. He showed them that he truly is God. But not all believed.

Plus with thousands upon thousands of people there, not everyone saw what he did. But then it was getting late. The people were getting hungry. They didn't have enough food to feed all the people in such a desolate place. Philip, one of Jesus' disciples, figured that not even eight months worth of wages would be able to buy enough food to feed all of the people. The disciples urged Jesus to send the people into the surrounding villages so they could buy food for themselves. But these people came to hear Jesus. Jesus didn't want to send them away to get food. Because if he did, then they wouldn't be receiving any spiritual nourishment.

Jesus got up on the side of a mountain and commanded the people to sit down on the grass. His disciples found a boy who had five loaves of barely bread and two small fish—not even enough to feed the 12 disciples. But Jesus took them, asked the Lord's blessings on the food they were about to eat, and gave the food to the disciples. The disciples then distributed the food to the people. The NIV says, **They all ate and were satisfied.** But the Greek is a tad bit different. The

Greek says they all ate and were full. They were filled with food. It's not as if they all had a little to eat, enough to satisfy their desires. No they all ate to their hearts content. They had enough to fill them up. And there are some left over. More than just some. They had 12 large baskets full of food. They had more left over than when they began. Jesus started with just five loaves of bread and two small fish. But 12 large baskets of food were left over after everyone ate. And 5000 grown men were there! And that's not counting the women and the children. This was certainly a miracle. And everyone knew that it was Jesus who had taken care of him. Even when it seemed as if there was no possible way to feed the people, Jesus did just that.

You would think that the disciples would never forget what Jesus did. You would expect that they would never doubt his power again. Yet they did. Later in Jesus' ministry, 4000 men, not counting women and children, had been with him for three days without nothing to eat. When Jesus mentioned this to the disciples, they responded, **Where could we get enough bread in this remote place to feed such a crowd?** They didn't remember what Jesus did on the other side of the Sea of Galilee. It didn't even enter their minds that Jesus would take care of the people. They knew Jesus, they followed him around, they saw him perform miracle after miracle. And yet they doubted; they didn't trust in Jesus to take care of things himself. Sad, isn't it? Then why do you do it? You doubt all the time. You know Christ's power. You know that he has taken care of in the past. But you get sick, a loved one gets in a serious accident, you lose our job. It seems as if all hope is lost. So you start to complain about God; and you doubt his power and promises, you question his mercy and compassion. He isn't watching over you, he isn't with you; he must have something against you, that he allows you to suffer in this way. You can take care of things yourself—you are your own capable person; you can get through this on your own. Until you figure out that you can't.

But look again at Christ's power. He healed their sicknesses. He fed 5000 with just a little bit of food. And had more left over than when he started. These are just two examples. There are many more. Including his ultimate act of compassion. It was compassion that led Christ to take our sins upon himself and to suffer the condemnation

that we deserve. It led him to give us his perfect life and to rise from the dead three days after his death. He did this so that we would have the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. All hope of saving ourselves was certainly lost. So he took care of us, like he always does.

There is no reason to doubt Christ's compassion. There is no reason to doubt his power and promises. He takes care of us again and again.

Does that mean that no one will ever go hungry in this life? No. Does that mean that you will never suffer at all? Of course not. And yet we that no matter what happens in our lives, God will make it turn out to our benefit. Even if we can't see it at the time, it will. This side of heaven, we may never see the benefit of the troubles and hardships in our lives. But we know that Christ will take care of us just as he has always done.

And no matter what happens in this life we know where we will be when it's all over. We'll be in heaven. We'll have a perfect life with our Savior forever. A life free from sin and its affects. So we suffer, we go through hardships and difficulties. It may seem as if all hope may be lost. But it's not. Because in the end, we'll be in heaven.

In movies, all hope seems to be lost, when suddenly it isn't. In our lives all hope may seem to be lost. Yet we know it isn't. For Christ sees us and his heart goes out to us. This compassion led him to give up his life to do what we couldn't do—save ourselves. This compassion leads him to watch over our lives and to take care of us again and again. We know that he will continue to do so all the days of our lives. So we trust in our compassionate and powerful God. Amen.