

# Jesus, Compassion and Me

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## Scripture: Lamentations 3:22 and Matthew 15:32 (NIV)

Lam. 3:22, "Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail."

Matt. 15:32, "Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way."

## Introduction

Jeremiah was a faithful prophet of God in Jerusalem at the time of the siege and destruction by the Babylonians. He was rejected, beaten, put in stocks, had a death sentence spoken over him, had his scrolls burnt, left to die in the mud and called a liar.

The first 20 verses of Lamentations 3 – a poem – describes Jeremiah's suffering, physically, emotionally and spiritually.

Yet the title of chapter 3 is not "Jeremiah's Troubles" or something like that, it is titled, "Great is Your Faithfulness."

## Body

At this point, we need to remind ourselves of our definition of compassion, which we described as, "*not only recognizing another's distress but a willingness to do something about it.*" Let's explore it a bit.

Compassion means to "suffer with;" this is the original Latin context. When someone compassionately reaches out to you in your distress, it means that they feel your pain to the degree that they are there with you. Let me explain:

Firstly, we have the realization that the moment someone extends compassion to you, you are no longer alone in your suffering.

Secondly, we can ponder for a moment about how important it is to see the distress of others and to extend our compassion to them.

Thirdly and most importantly, where is God when He sees your need and suffering? He is there with you.

Flowing from this, we need to touch on our expanded understanding of compassion because two important things were introduced:

1. A desire to ease suffering.
2. A desire to remove the cause of the suffering. Permanently.

Easing suffering and removing the cause of suffering is certainly similar, but also different. On the one hand, removing the cause will ease the suffering and on the other hand, easing the suffering is a journey to the cause of the suffering.

God's compassion toward us is eternal in its consequences. We were all on a journey to the "smoking section" of the life hereafter, and there was nothing that we could do about it. God saw your need and became involved, not only in your salvation but in the rest of your life. I repeat: God became involved because God is loving and compassionate. And you, brothers and sisters, are the target of His love and compassion.

In everyday life, we can – to various degrees associate with the life Jesus, Jeremiah, Paul, Peter. Our friends and family, their lives; our lives have their share of suffering and pain. Yet God extends His compassion into our suffering and needs.

There are no conditions to His compassion, like an if...then sort of thing. It's compassion, grace, mercy and unconditional love.

Let's recall Matthew 15:32 (when Jesus fed the 4000) and include verse 37:

- <sup>32</sup> "...I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat...."
- <sup>37</sup> "They all ate and were satisfied. Afterwards, the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over."

Jesus was already moved with compassion because we read in verse 31 that “the people were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled made well, the lame walking and the blind seeing.”

And in verse 32, we witness a continuation of Jesus’ compassion.

Everyone ate until they had enough, and even then, 7 baskets remained. Not the small Jewish baskets (*kophinos* – *kof-ee-nos*) but the gentile baskets (*spuris* – *spoo-rece*), which is much bigger. A *Spuris* is really big, big enough to lower Paul over the wall in Damascus.

After Jesus fed the 5000, 12 *kophinos* baskets were gathered in.

After Jesus fed the 4000, 7 *spurice* baskets were gathered in.

Many might see the left-overs as waste...until we realize these truths:

1. The compassion of Jesus is more than enough for every situation; it’s abundant. You can’t “use it up.” 7 loaves were given and 7 *spurice* baskets were left over. With what are you willing to trust Jesus?
2. People, in those times, took food with them on their journeys. That the remaining food was gathered in before Jesus sent the crowd away leads me to theorize that there were “takeaways” available.

Jesus, the bread of life, said, “I have compassion.” He has compassion relative to our spiritual needs and relative to our lifelong physical needs. He has compassion toward our daily needs and compassion for the whole world.

God is a God of compassion. That’s why He moves in this world, in our lives, why He redeems us, why He heals us, why He comforts us and extends His grace, mercy and kindness. He reaches into our deepest needs and delivers us from it.

Here is our comfort: Jesus sees you suffering, identifies with your suffering, feels sympathy for you, desires to ease your suffering and to remove the cause of your suffering. Out of love, He wants to be involved and He will not leave you half-full.

But there are three important lessons to be learnt from this morning’s Scriptures, and before I close, allow me to share them with you:

1. Hope. The less will become more. This speaks of reliance. The 7 loaves that the disciples brought along with them becomes 7 baskets of left-over food after Jesus, the bread of life's compassionate intervention. Upon who is your reliance?
2. Your future must come out of your past. This speaks to gratitude. Now that Jesus has shown you gratitude, will you live to reflect this reality? Part of this reality is both opening yourself to His ongoing compassion and being compassionate towards others.
3. Give thanks, praise God. Jesus did it. The multitudes did it. So should we.

## **Conclusion**

Allow me to pull things together. Lamentations 3:22 reads, "Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail." His compassion did not fail Jeremiah, it did not fail the 5000 or 4000. And it will not fail you.

What have you done to deserve or earn the compassion of God? Lamentations says that we should be consumed. Which is fair and just.

But Jeremiah describes God as loving. And therefore, His compassion will never fail you or anyone else.

Ours is to demonstrate Jesus' infinite compassion in this world because it embraces every dimension of need, and this is a beautiful truth.

The title of chapter 3 of Lamentations is fitting, "Great is Your Faithfulness."

Amen.