

Vision Practice 2

Share Compassion with All Who Suffer



Focus Text Mark 4:24-29

And [Jesus] said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear; the measure you give will be the measure you get, and still more will be given you. ²⁵ For to those who have, more will be given; and from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away."

[Jesus] also said, "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, ²⁷ and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. ²⁸ The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. ²⁹ But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle,

because the harvest has come."

Opening Prayer & Time of Sharing

Go around the room and each person fills in their own personal thanksgiving, "Thank you , Lord, for the compassion I experienced from_____."

Applying the Text to the Vision

This short little parable is often called the parable of the seed growing of itself. There seems to be confidence or faith in the one who sowed the seed that allows him to sleep. What is happening to that seed? How is life and growth taking place for that seed under the ground?

The word "share" means to divide and parcel into shares, to cut. When we think of sharing we often romanticize it acting as if sharing is always pleasant and easy. Henri Nouwen, Donald McNeill and Douglas Morrison in their book Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life, remind us that compassion means "to suffer with."

- ✘ ***How do we take seriously our mission to share compassion with all who suffer?***
- ✘ ***When have you found it difficult to sharing compassion?***
- ✘ ***How do we begin to see, notice and reach out to all? How about people we don't like? How about people with whom we don't agree?***

We are incarnational people who believe that God took on flesh and now acts in the world through us, the body of Christ. Daniel Berrigan once said, "It all comes down to this: Whose flesh are you touching

and why? Whose flesh are you recoiling from and why?" How do we honestly face these questions in our personal lives and in our congregation? Can we be honest about our hopes and fears as we search for ways to shared compassion with all who suffer?

Respond and Celebrate

In her book City Farmer: Adventures in Urban Food Growing, Lorraine Johnson writes, "Real food carries it dirt along with it, no matter how hard we scrub. Soil memory lurks in the folds & wrinkles & even in the smooth skins of fruits and vegetables, giving them their character and their flavor. The French call this *terroir* and while the term is mainly deployed for wine it applies equally well to everything edible. Flavor identity comes from place.

As we think about suffering we know that often our own sadness, grief, trauma, and brokenness allows us to empathize with others in ways we never imagined as we were walking through our own valley of darkness.

List all the ways people in your group have experienced suffering either as the one suffering or the one providing compassion. Now list all the ways that were helpful in how compassion was shared. How you currently offering that compassion in your congregation? What are ways you could expand your caring acts?

Closing Song We Are Called (ELW 720)

Closing Prayer

Holy One, we call out your name in as many ways as we can. We fix your role towards us in the ways we need. We approach you from the particular angle of our life. We do all that, not because you need to be identified, but because of our deep need, our deep wound, our deep hope. And then, we are astonished that while our names for you serve for a moment, you break beyond them in your freedom, you show yourself yet fresh beyond our utterance, you retreat into your splendor beyond our grasp. We are – by your freedom and your hiddenness – made sure yet again that you are God...beyond us, for us, but beyond us, not at our beck and call, but always in your own way. We stammer about your identity, only to learn that it is our own unsettling before you that wants naming. Beyond all our explaining and capturing and fixing you...we give you praise, we thank you for your fleshed presence in suffering love, and for our names that you give us. Amen.

From Awed in Heaven, Rooted in Earth, prayers of Walter Brueggemann

