

CHRIST THE ONLY HOPE ... FOR KENTUCKY

"And Jesus went forth and saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick" (Matthew 14:14).

Having previously called the twelve to discipleship and to intimate fellowship with Him, Christ called them to apostleship, "briefed" or instructed them as to what they were to do and how they were to do it, and sent them forth to put into practice what He had taught them. They were sent forth two by two, thereby encouraging each others, better evaluating their problems and opportunities and supplementing the work of each other. Christ gave them power to cast out demons and to heal all the maladies that afflict the human body, He sent them to preach the gospel, to teach the believers, and to heal the sick.

Like the Lord Jesus, the apostles had the glorious task of urging their hearers to repent of their sins, which was necessary for them to do in order to receive forgiveness and salvation.

While thus busily engaged in a sincere effort to bring people into a saving knowledge of Christ, the apostles did not neglect to minister to those who were suffering physically. They cast out demons and healed the sick. Of course, they did not do those things in their own strength, but the Lord did them through His servants who had yielded themselves to Him. Christ always empowers those whom He calls into His service for the tasks which He assigns them.

After their return from their first preaching tour in Galilee without Christ, the apostles reported to Him, from Whom they had received their message and derived their power, and to Whom alone they were responsible what they had said and done. As Christ looked at and listened to these men He noted their physical weariness. When they had finished their interesting report, He invited them to accompany Him on a retreat saying, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile." He wanted them to go with Him into an uninhabited place where they might find rest, relaxation, and refreshment of mind and body in privacy. Rest in a place of solitude is a necessity for those who work strenuously with the public and are frequently deprived of adequate time for regular meals. Physical and mental health and spiritual vitality are not possible without rest from work and meditation in solitude.

Christ and His apostles departed by ship for a place of solitude and much-needed rest for a brief season. Because of their great interest in the healing ministry of Christ, the inconsiderate crowds watched Christ and His apostles enter the boat in which they departed on their journey to an undisclosed spot where they could rest and relax for a time without being disturbed. Observing the direction in which the boat went, and surmising whither the Lord and His party were going, they proceeded thither by land. Along the way others joined their ranks. When our Lord and His party disembarked the throng they had sought to evade was awaiting their arrival. Notwithstanding their efforts to be alone, their intended rest was interrupted by the multitudes.

Instead of being annoyed or irritated by the intrusion of that vast throng of people, Christ was deeply moved because He saw them as helpless sheep without a shepherd. Because they were looking for guidance and hungering for spiritual truth, Christ was filled with compassion for them. His compassionate heart was stirred because they were so poverty-stricken in spiritual things. Although our Lord needed rest, the condition and needs of the throng appealed to Him so strongly that He began to teach them. What He taught them before He fed them reveals the fact that man's spiritual needs are even more important than his physical ones.

Compassion is one of the great characteristics of God which distinguishes Him from all other gods. We are reminded that when His Son, Jesus Christ, saw the multitude "He had compassion on them." In turn, we as Christians, should seek to show the people whom we contact what God is like. To do so, we must be people of compassion.

In writing for the Baptist Bulletin Service some years ago, William Pitt said: "While serving in a small country church, I became closely associated with one of the church families. They attended nearly every service. The youngest of four children was a three-year-old boy named Doug. He and I became fast friends, especially during my visits in their home. One Sunday morning as the people were leaving the church and I stood at the door greeting them, Doug put out his arms for me to pick him up. I was surprised when he put his arms around my neck and with his lips close to my ear, whispered, 'Is God like you?'"

This incident and question both shocks and disturbs us as to what kind of an image of God we are portraying to others.

Compassion does not consist of merely feeling sorry. Compassion is pity in action. People can have pity and not do anything. If compassion is real, it must issue in deeds. Each day every person has an equal allotment of time as a gift from God. This time is not like knowledge or money, in that it cannot be stored. It must be used now or it is gone forever. We shall be held accountable to God for the way in which we use this gift of time, and surely we want to be good stewards of our time. There are many good causes on which we can spend our time, as Christian stewards, but we must be selective. We need to be prayerful and discerning. Possessing a discerning heart, Christ saw each person as an individual with a bundle of needs. With a discerning and compassionate heart, Christ dealt with the needs of each person. It is only with God's help that we are able to know the best way to show compassion to each acquaintance, neighbor, friend, or even the nearest and dearest loved one.

Believing that Christ is the only hope for the people of our state, Kentucky Baptists show their compassion and their love for them, or they fail to show them, by contributing to State Missions. From these funds various causes, or phases of our denominational work, receive support.

From the contributions made by our fellow-Baptists during this Week of Prayer for State Missions, a portion will go to different objects within Kentucky.

One of them is Cedarmore, where various conferences are held. A second is Clear Creek Baptist School which provides educational opportunities for older men and women who enter a church related vocation when it is impractical or extremely difficult for them to attend high school or college. Another object is Oneida Institute, a Baptist High School in which boys and girls live and learn. Last year a considerable number of Home and Foreign Missionaries, who have gone from Kentucky to serve on a mission field, each received a check for ten dollars to be used to buy books or magazines.

A Mountain Missions Conference has been held annually for the last twenty-one years at Oneida. This conference lasts from Monday through Friday, and from 150 to 250

attend, plus many local people who drive in nightly. Pastors' and Laymen's Conferences are held at Jonathan Creek Assembly and Campbellsville College each summer, under the direction of Brother G. R. Pendergraph. Rooms are provided by the institutions and the meals are provided by Kentucky Baptists.

Appointees of the Foreign Mission Board who are Kentucky-born are presented with a check for \$100 to help with their expenses in preparation for their missionary journey to a foreign land. Funds are also given to help meet emergency needs of some 45-50 churches in mission areas each year. Student summer workers are assisted also. Funds also go to the salaries of State Missionaries, and a \$275 scholarship per year goes to each one of their children who attends a Kentucky Baptist school.

An International Student Conference with 189 in attendance was held at Mammoth Cave National Park February 7-9. Thirty-seven countries were represented.

Real concern for these needs in our state will cause us to pray and give that some of them, at least, may be met.