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"Passion"

Genesis 18:1-9;21:1-7 Matthew 9:35-10:8 Romans 5:1-5

PRAYER OF PRAISE

Gracious God, you shelter your people amid their distress; you provide them a haven of security and rest. You bring comfort to those with affliction, and hear the pleas of the persecuted. You cause your mercy to flow like living water; your benevolence stretches to the ends of the earth. We come in praise of all your goodness and lift our voices with thanks for your care as we lift high the cross and your love proclaim.

INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS

When you think of Abraham you think of him as being the father of many nations, right? Well at least he is considered the father of three worldwide monotheistic faiths and devotees of those faiths reside in "many nations." In Genesis 15, God first makes a covenant with Abram that he will have as many descendants as the stars in the sky. In Genesis 16, there is no child in sight so Abram's wife Sarai gives her Egyptian slave named Hagar to Abram so they can help God out with God's promise. Hagar bears a son and names him Ishmael. At this point Abram is 86 years old. Thirteen years later, when Abram is 99 and Ishmael is 13, God speaks to Abram again. In Genesis 17, God changes Abram's name to Abraham and his wife Sarai's name to Sarah. God reiterates the promise that Abraham and Sarah will be parents to a son and tells Abraham to seal that promise with the sign of circumcision. So, at 99, Abraham and at 13 Ishmael and all of the males in Abraham's household were circumcised. This brings us to chapter 18:1-5. Read. Now let's skip over to chapter 21:1-7 for the rest of the story.

INTRODUCTION TO MATTHEW

This morning's gospel lesson focuses our attention on the first missionary journey of the twelve disciples of Jesus. According to Isaiah, not only was Abraham to be the father of many nations, but also one of those nations, the nation of Israel, had a specific calling to be a LIGHT to the OTHER nations. They were to lead the way, to set the example, to be witnesses to the other nations about the light they had received from their Lord and God. Let's read about Jesus charge to his disciples as he sends them forth on their first missionary journey. Hear the gospel of our Lord from Matthew 9:35-10:15

What first comes to mind when you hear the word passion? About what or whom are we truly passionate? Our spouse? our Family? Our dads? Our country? Our sports teams? Our cars? Our Politics? Our pets? Our pet peeves?

Yesterday at our Men's Breakfast we heard a presentation from "A Life To Live," a relatively new organization in Baytown led by Jay Garrett Jr. Jay has a passion for animals. The mission of his organization is to eventually establish a No Kill

Shelter in Baytown for cats and dogs who, for whatever reason, have no home. They are a 100% volunteer organization that offers services to spay/neuter and microchip cats and dogs and work to find them foster homes until they can find permanent homes. They have a passion for animals.

My wife Anne and I are part of a Movie Group that meets once a month. During the month we agree to watch a certain movie and a DVD and then come together for a meal to discuss them. This month one of the movies we saw and discussed was "Loving." It told the story of the Supreme Court ruling in the case of the State of Virginia vs. Loving that removed the ban on interracial marriage.

In 1958, weeks after Richard Loving and Mildred Jeter were married in Washington, D.C, Sheriff's deputies burst into their Virginia home and jailed them for unlawful cohabitation. To avoid a one year jail sentence the couple agreed to leave Virginia for 25 years, but after several years in Washington decided they wanted to come home. Mildred wrote to then-Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy and was referred to the ACLU, which took on the case. Recently, on the 50th anniversary of the Supreme Court's decision, Virginia's governor Terry McAuliffe said, "The Lovings were convicted of the high crime of loving each other." When one of the lawyers asked Richard what he wanted to tell the Supreme Court Richard said, "Tell them, "I love my wife." The Lovings were guilty of ... loving. . Oh that we too might be found guilty of... loving.

As followers of Jesus what is our passion? For what did Jesus have a passion? Jesus had a passion for souls. I believe our primary motivation for sharing God's love is because we have a passion for our Lord that works its way out in showing compassion for others.

To be passionate is to be excited, to be delighted, to be consumed by, to not-being-able- to-sleep-for-thinking-about.... your passion. Let me tell you about my grandbaby! Let me show you some pictures here on my cell phone. Have you tried this new Nosa yogurt?

Mel Gibson, the actor who has made a career portraying men of passion leading other men into battle like Braveheart and Lethal Weapon 1-12 had a passion for the Lord that moved him to make a controversial film called "The Passion of the Christ." The film depicted in graphic detail the last week of Jesus' life.

Traditionally, the words used to describe the last week of our Lord's life have been "Passion Week." We know that Christ endured great suffering on our behalf. So should we have a passion for our Lord.

Where is the passion for the Lord? So many can take it or leave it. Many have never taken it. Many have left it. To be a part of a dynamic fellowship that engages in vibrant worship and exhibits faithful stewardship takes PASSION.

Dr. Ben Johnson, long time professor of evangelism at Columbia Seminary in Atlanta once told me, "Evangelism is like sex. If you have the passion, you'll find the method."

I believe a second equally important motivation for sharing the love of God is because we have COMPASSION for the World. SHOW SLIDE!

This compassion is the reason Jesus tells his disciples to go on their first mission trip. When [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." Can you think of a better description of so many people today than "harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd?"

Jesus had compassion on the crowds. They had no idea where they were headed or how they would get there. Jesus understood the real tragedy of a life of empty values, a life with no direction, a life linked to false gods. So, he sent his 12 disciples to go to the lost sheep of Israel. The men to whom he spoke had virtually no wealth, no social position, no prestige, and no extraordinary talent. Nevertheless they took our Lord at his word. They went.

You don't have to go on a trip to be in mission. A Mission trip can be a trip to the grocery store. Mission can take place through a chance meeting, a PTO meeting, a business meeting, or an over the fence greeting.

We are not a business enterprise. Our motive is not a more impressive bottom line. Our goal is not to enhance institutional pride. Our aim is not to be the biggest and the best. We are a family whose mission is to share God's love because we have a PASSION for the Lord and a COMPASSION for the world.

There are people outside the walls of this church who are confused, angry, hurting, dying helpless and harassed like sheep without a shepherd. There are families that are disintegrating, minds being destroyed by drugs, old folks feeling forgotten. And we have a shepherd, the BEST shepherd and He calls us to find our passion and ... show our compassion.

I was so blessed to see that a 14 of our congregation have chosen to sponsor a child through Compassion International. This morning's Baytown Sun has an article on page 1A about CASA-Court Appointed Special Advocates that Debbye Waller shared about last month. I just received an email announcing that CASA is having a training session from 9am to 3pm July 10-13 at the First Baptist Church of Mont Belvieu. After training CASA volunteers offer support and friendship for abused and neglected children and speak up for their best interests when they have to go to court.

Jesus had compassion on the crowds. Where are those who care enough to become involved in the lives of others? Where are those willing to take their time

to show love to young people and old folks, to the substance abuser and the victims of broken families, to the down and out as well as the up and in?

The Church is not about us. It's about God. God wants to save us from ourselves. God knows who among us have been possessed by unclean spirits. God knows who is sick and what's ailing them. God knows who is dead in their faith and close to death in their bodies. God knows who is a modern-day leper and needs to be healed. (1)

When I was on vacation I met a woman named Susan. We were both part of a group of 30 people taking the three day Ukelele Workshop at the Kerrville Folk Festival. We were learning a song called Saturday night. The Chorus went, "Everybody loves Saturday night!" I said, "Not preachers." (because you know Saturday night is when we preachers are up late putting finishing touches on sermons). Susan said, "I guess it's the same for Friday night for rabbis." I asked, "Are you a rabbi?" She said, "No." Over the course of the course we had fun teasing each other, but on the last day she shared some of her concerns with me and I said this. "Your ancestors worshipped the One God while my ancestors worshipped the Sun and the Rain and the stars. Your ancestors showed the light for my ancestors and through Jesus allowed me to be grafted into your Family Tree. We both owe our faith to Father Abraham." She said, "Thank you. Not everyone sees it that way." Later, as I reflected on our conversation it occurred to me that in John 10:16 when Jesus said to his disciples, "I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold, I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd," he was talking to the Jewish members of his flock. As a Gentile, I am one of those who was "not of that Jewish fold" that had to be brought in. Jesus may have sent his disciples on their first missionary journey "only to the lost sheep of Israel," but there were many other journeys that followed that eventually reached this sheep who was without a shepherd.

On Thursday I went to visit with Mohammed Amad Kahn, the relatively new Imam at the Mosque here in Baytown. He has a passion for the people of Baytown and wants to work together with other people of faith to help our community. He too owes his faith to Father Abraham through Ismael that we read about earlier this morning. On Monday night after our Vacation Bible School I will be going to participate in their prayer service that is a part of their observance of Ramadan, and I will join in breaking fast with them in hopes of growing a relationship where we can work together to address our common compassion for our ... crowds.

Jesus is filled with compassion for the crowds in Baytown and is calling us to care enough to become involved in the lives of others. Jesus calls us to be willing to take our time to show love to young people and old folks, to the substance abuser and the victims of broken families, to the down and out as well as the up and in. Jesus is calling us to invite folks to come be a part of Vacation

Bible School. May WE be found guilty of loving...as we reach out to waitresses and widowers and Jews and Muslims and engage them in conversation and demonstrate God's love and our love for them because, in addition to our love for our spouse, our family, our dads, our country, our sports teams, our cars, our Politics, our pets and our pet peeves we have compassion for the crowds because we share our Lord's...passion. .

Let's pray. Dear Lord, give us the passion and compassion to be used by you to reach others in your name. Give us the courage to step outside our comfort zone, as we know you did when you left your home in heaven to come walk among us, live like us, and die for us. Thank you for this wonderful fellowship of followers to encourage us, to lift us up to stir us up to good works.

We give thanks for fathers who cared for us, who helped provide for us, who protected us. We pray for fathers who aren't in heaven yet, and give thanks for those who are. We give thanks for men who stepped in when fathers couldn't, or wouldn't; who served as role models, mentors, teachers, and inspiration.

We pray for the children and their families that will enter our doors all this next week for our Vacation Bible School. We give thanks for all of the workers and helpers who will make this week of witness possible.

We thank you for Father Abraham who with Sarah began a great family of faith. We thank you for the many nations that have come from them and the light that has shone on us all.

We pray for Representative Scalise and all those that were injured in the shooting in Virginia that they might have a full recovery. We pray for the families of the victims of the daily shootings about which we may never hear. We pray for President Trump and for Congress. We pray for the family of Philando Castile as they grieve their loss. We pray for the family of Otto Warmbier finally returned to them from captivity in North Korea as they hold vigil beside him not knowing what the next day holds for him. We pray for the crew of the USS Fitzgerald and the families of the seven members who lost their lives in the collision with the Japanese freighter.

Help us as we are sent on mission in this world. Help us to lie more boldly obeying your command to love our neighbors as ourselves. As we go forth into our world, help us to be at peace, to render no one evil for evil and in all that we do to give you the honor and the glory. This we pray in Jesus' name.

1) Scattered Reign, by Samuel Zumwalt