

3. The Building Block of Compassion

Hey, welcome to The Journey Church, New York City. I'm Kerrick and I want to thank you for joining me today. As we continue our first teaching series of 2022. It's called Building blocks the foundations for a great life. So if you haven't yet, take a moment, click the button beside the live stream player downloads your message notes, so you can follow along during the service today. Now, listen, during this series, we're trying to show you how to build the foundation to a great life by looking at three great statements from Jesus found in the New Testament of the Bible, three great statements that we've built our church on over the last 20 years. It's three great statements that I believe God wants you to build your life on today. In fact, our memory verse for this series is found in Matthew chapter seven. And then here Jesus is talking about how to build a foundation to a great life. It's our memory verse.

So let's look at this. And let's read it out loud together. It's Matthew seven, verses 24 and 25. So wherever you're joining us for Church Online, and want you to read this out loud with me, are you ready? Go. Anyone who listens to my teaching, and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock, though the rain comes in Torrance, and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won't collapse, because it is built on bedrock. You know, we've been working on building the foundation of our church, it's a journey over the last 20 years. And the truth is, you can build a rickety old shack pretty quickly. But you see, we didn't want the journey just to be some rickety old shack that would collapse at the first sign of adversity. Now we wanted our church to represent Jesus, we wanted to, we wanted it to be worthy of the name of the Bride of Christ, we wanted to be a church that would impact real lives for Jesus Christ. And we wanted to be a church that would have a long term presence here in New York City. And let's it by God's grace, God has done some incredible things in in through our church.

During our first 20 years, we wanted to be a church that shared the gospel of Jesus Christ with this great city. You know, the first year of our church, we saw one person who was baptized. But in the 18 years after that, we saw 2986 people who were baptized, I gotta say, I praise God every day that he allows us to be a part of so much life change. It's not just New York City, we wanted to be a church that fulfill the Great Commission and took the gospel to the entire world. So we started some incredible international partnerships, including our most recent one, we just started this year, a new partnership with the Moscow Christian evangelical seminary, that's helping train pastors in Russia, to take the gospel to one of the most unreached nations in the entire world. And those international partnerships, and in Russia, South Africa, those are exciting. But we knew that if we were going to be a great church here in New York City, that one of our foundational building blocks had to be compassion for the less fortunate for those in need here in our city.

In fact, if you look, in your notes, you'll see our, that gray boxes is the foundations of a great church, this has been a state had been a statement that has been with our church from the very beginning. It's what we've been using in this series. So I want you to, to follow along, as I read this, and fill in the blank when I get there. It's the foundations of a great life. And it says this, a great commitment to the great commandments that we looked at last week. And the great commission that we're going to look at next week, done with great compassion, right, that word in compassion. That's what we're talking about this

week, a great commitment to the great commandments and the Great Commission, then with great compassion will grow a great Christian and a great church. Now, why did we choose the great compassion, one of the three great statements of Jesus that that we're looking at and that we're, this one is the one we're focusing on today?

Why did we choose the great compassion to be one of the building blocks for the journey? Well, for one thing, the New York City Living here New York City, this is a city of great contrast. This is a city where the richest of the rich live right next to the poorest of the poor. I mean, staggering to think about the real need that's here in our city. It's staggering to think about overwhelming to think about how many people in the numbers 48,000 will be sleeping in homeless shelters tonight in New York City. 48,000 people and of those 48,000 people 15,000 Are children that are going to be in the homeless shelters tonight. Then according to data released by the Census Bureau, almost 20% Or one out of every five New Yorkers is living in poverty right now. And so we knew that to be the church that God wanted us to be in New York City. compassion would have to be one of our building blocks. But we also knew that it's not something that you can do quickly. It's something that requires a long term investment, and that would take time to grow into.

And so today, I want to talk to you about how we have tried to build our church, on the great compassion, and how by joining us, and being a part of what we're doing here at the journey, compassion can be one of the building blocks of your great life, as well. Now, before I show you the great compassion, Jesus's great compassion statement, I want to jump in and start with what it takes to build a life on the foundation of compassion. So if you look in your notes, let's look at this, how to build my life. On the great compassion, I want you to write this in, in your notes how to build my life on the great compassion, here's the first step. Remember, God's compassion for me. Remember God's compassion for me. Now, today, we're looking at how our compassion for those in need can have a great impact on others. But if you think about it, it's God's compassion for us that really started everything. God's compassion for us is the absolute life changer.

First of all, and you may not think about this every day, but you and I, we experience God's compassion every day of our life. Unfortunately, most of the time, we don't notice it, and we don't think about it. So often, we just take for granted all the blessings that God pours out into our lives every day. Because you see this, this is the thing about God. God isn't compassionate towards you, just when you deserve it. No, God is compassionate towards you, even when you don't deserve it. That's God's character. God wants to bless your life with good things, not because of you. He wants to bless your life with good things just because that's his character, because he is good. That means that no matter what you do, even when you're at your worst, God is always at his best. Nothing takes away his love and compassion for you. And I want you to get this God's greatest act of compassion. In fact, it's the greatest act of compassion in the history of the world, was when God sent His Son to die on the cross for our sins, after we had turned our backs on him. I love John 316. These are the words of Jesus. And I want you to look at what he says, Jesus says, we're this is how God love the world, this hour, God show compassion to the world, He gave His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life.

You know, there's not a day that goes by that you and I don't sin, that we don't make a mistake. But although we even though we constantly rebel against God, God still wants us, God still loves us, God still forgives us. And that's what real compassion is. That's, that's to give everything being willing to give everything even your life is Jesus did for someone who had turned their back on you. So here's what I want you to understand. If you want to have compassion for others, the less fortunate. It starts with God's compassion for us. It begins with remembering God's compassion, His love and His sacrifice for you, when you didn't deserve it, but desperately needed it, and opening your heart to do the same for those in need around you. So that's the first step to building a life on the great compassion. Remember God's compassion for you.

Now, the next step to building my life on the great compassion is this write this in, recognize the needs around me, write that in, recognize the needs around me now, for just a moment, and this is for those of you who at some point in your life moved to New York now, those of you who were born here, but for just a moment, I want you to think about if you move to New York City, I want you to think about that first day that you moved to the city. And I want you to remember the first time you walked around the city, and you saw all the homeless people you got on the subway and the first time someone on the subway, ask you for money. I want you to remember how did that make you feel when you saw all of the great need in the city. I remember when I first moved here, how overwhelmed that was when I saw how much poverty there was how much addiction and how much brokenness there was. That impacted me a great deal especially since my wife Laurie and I, we were working with a homeless population. At that time we were working with at risk children in youth and in the needs just they were overwhelming. But I gotta tell you, something begins to happen in my heart that I think happens to a lot of us after we've been in the city for a while if we're not careful. I began to see so much need and so much poverty every day that I began to look past the people and pretty soon I didn't see those who are in need around me anymore.

I just look past them in my heart moved from being compassionate to being callous. I begin not to see the needs in front of me. Then everything just sort of blended in into a blurry back drop for the city, my heart begins to become numb to the need. You know, it's if we're honest, it's easy when you live in the city just to become focused on yourself to get busy and distracted, you know, our schedule is full, you're always in a hurry. And because of that, it's really easy to ignore the real needs that are sitting there right in front of you. But compassion demands that we see the needs in front of us that we see others with the same compassion with which Jesus sees us. And that's what Jesus shows us in the great compassion. I want to show you this passage and stare in your notes. I waited long enough to show you the key passage. But let's take a moment to look at this. And I want to take a moment to break it down. So I want you to have your pen as well as we go through this. This is the great compassion, Jesus's great statement that here's what he says. The King will say to those on his right, Come you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. What's he talking about? Here? He's talking about heaven. He's talking about eternal blessing, eternal reward. He said, This is waiting for you.

So what do we got to do to receive that Linde look at what he says? He says, it's waiting for you. He says, For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home, I was naked. And you gave me clothing. I was sick. And you cared for

me. I was in prison, and you visited me. Then Jesus says, I tell you the truth. When you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me. Now listen, for the last 20 years, this passage has been our guide here at the journey for how to show compassion to the least of these to those in need in our city. And I'm going to tell you right from the beginning, we have not been perfect at this. We've made mistakes. we've stumbled we fallen. But we tried to live out this passage is a building block for our church. And so I want to break this down. And I want to show you the six key components of the great compassion. So I have your pen ready I want you to jot some things down here. Now you'll notice I got some feelings for you.

These first two components go together so on the right, I want you to underline the phrase fed me in a great compassion Underline the phrase a fed me and then on the left hand side in the first bullet I want you to write in feed the hungry, write that in feed the hungry the first that's the first component, he says, I was hungry and you fed me so on the left hand side right feed the hungry and then it back in the great compassion I want you to underline the phrase gave me a drink, just underline gave me a drink. He said I was thirsty, he gave me a drink event to the left hand side and want you to write this in, give a drink to the thirsty write that in give a drink to the thirsty. Now, we've been working on these first two components of the great compassion since the very beginning of our church from from very early on, we developed the partnership with graffiti community ministries and other inner city ministries here in New York City, where we've been able to serve meals to the urban poor into the homeless populations on a regular basis. And I gotta tell you over the years, we've completely lost track of how many 1000s of meals we've been able to provide the Deering COVID It's been really tough in ministries like graffiti and in relief bus that we've worked with.

They lost almost all of their volunteer base, and they also lost a big chunk of their funding. And that's why I've been so proud of our church because as many ministries have stepped back from their compassion ministry, in the face of the pandemic, we've stepped for we stepped up we've been aggressive. Then over the last two years, we've had volunteers serving almost every single week to feed the homeless in inner city, New York in some way in a compassion ministry. And these are partnerships we're going to continue this year. And I know some of you you're already planning to serve on an upcoming Sunday, you're already you're already signed up on an upcoming Saturday me. But I'll show you in a moment how you can be involved. We've got some opportunities coming up on upcoming Saturdays where you can make a difference. So those are the first to feed the hungry, give a drink to the thirsty. Now let's go back to the great compassion.

Next, go back into the passage and Underline the phrase invited me into your home, invited me into your home and then off to the left on that third bullet and want you to write in welcome those who are new. welcome those who are new. You know, the biblical term for this is hospitality. You know, the journey is our church home. And you may have never thought about compassion in this way. But you help fulfill the great compassion. When you invite your friends and your co workers and your neighbors and your family members to come to your church, you invite them to church with you. In fact, you can help fulfill the great compassion just two weeks from today by inviting someone to the kickoff of our new team King series called the relationship code, you know, breaking the code to healthy relationships, we'd love for you to invite someone, that's a great way to show the great compassion, use those invite cards that that we're going to give you to do that, you know, at the journey. We're known as a friendly

church. And you know why? Because our members are welcoming. And whenever someone new comes, whether it's Church Online, especially if it's in person, our members are so excited to see new people show up to help them and greet them and to make them feel welcome. And so let me just encourage you, when you serve as a greeter or an usher on a Sunday evening, if you serve on our online greeting team on the chat, or when you help direct or welcome someone who is new at our church, or you serve in the office on Monday and write notes to our first time guest, you're showing compassion, and you're helping our church model, the great compassion. Now going back to the great compassion, and next I want you to underline this phrase, gave me clothing, Underline the phrase gave me clothing and then off to the left, I want you to write this in.

Now, once you're in the fourth bullet, closed, those who are in need clothes, those who are in need. Now at the journey, we've done this in a lot of different ways we've, we've donated clothing to inmates in prison, we generously donated clothing at different times to homeless here in New York City. We even had a member this year, who knitted hand knitted hundreds of scarves that we were able to hand out to the homeless on the Lower East Side, just before Christmas, through graffiti community ministries, that was really cool. And by the way, we haven't just clothed and fed the less fortunate here in New York City.

But over the last almost 15 years, we've partnered with hope schools in South Africa, it was a school started by first city Baptist Church. And initially they were just there to take care of a handful of kids whose parents were in the HIV AIDS clinic. But it is turned into from just a daycare into a Christian school pre K through 12th grade were almost 300 kids who come from really impoverished situations and neighborhoods where they can get three meals a day where they can get free clothing that they wear to school, and they can receive free food, and they receive the love of Jesus along with their Christian education. And so through the special offering, we help feed the hungry, give a drink to the thirsty and closed those in need, even in South Africa.

Now next in your notes, I want you to underline the phrase in the Great Commission cared for me this is the fifth component cared for me, if it's to the left, I want you to look at this. Right this in care for the sick, care for the sick, the fifth component of the great compassion. And this is a part of the great compassion. To be honest, as a church we always wanted to fulfill but we were never sure how to do it exactly. But then COVID hit, and we were able to step into action as a church. In fact, we began by providing meals. During the darkest times of the pandemic here in the city, we started to provide meals to our frontline medical workers, the essential workers here in Metro New York City hospitals, I think we had six different hospitals we worked with. And what we would do is we would purchase food through our special offering funds. And we had volunteers help us deliver these meals to the hospitals to serve our frontline workers who were there doing really great work the nurses and doctors and other medical professionals. And we wanted to show them God's love during this time. And we did that week after week. And by the way, we were also through our benevolence fund, we were able to step up as a church and provide financially for several people who are facing difficult times during COVID maybe through the because of the loss of a job we helped them meet real needs. And one of my favorite stories of how journey people especially those in our growth group stepped up and and in provided for the sick, dear Dearing and help do the great compassion here was was growth groups who stepped up when people in their group got sick and provided gift cards for them to buy groceries and in other things. We even

had one member who took a friend to the hospital, and after she had her procedure took her back home and provided care for her in that way. And so we've been able to step up and and fulfill this part of the great compassion caring for the sick. And then finally, here's the the final part of the great compassion.

Going back to the passage I want you to underline you visited me and talks about when when I was in prison, you visited me and then off to the left I want you to write visit those in prison, visit those in prison. Again, this is a part of the great compassion that we always wanted to be a part of as a church, but it was it was so hard to get our foot in the door and get started and develop relationships. And then finally right before COVID That God did something and opened a door where we were able to get in and start a relationship with Rikers Island prison the large his prison system in the United States, probably the most notorious prison system in the United States. But just as we got started with that partnership, we just done our first in person services in the prison COVID came the pandemic hit and, and it shut down everything there. So we haven't been able to really visit the prison during COVID. In fact, we found out that during the pandemic, all outside ministry to the inmates stopped. In other words, there was no one doing anything for the prisoners here in New York City.

So as a church, we wanted to do something. So we decided we wanted to step up our ministry to the to the inmates into the prison, so that they wouldn't feel forgotten, and then get this this year. Because of the initial giving to the now's the time special offering, we were able to give every inmate between four and 5000 inmates at Rikers Island, we were able to give every inmate a meaningful Christmas gift we delivered at 400 pairs of socks 4200 notebooks at 400, pencils 250 copies of the book, unshakable to the inmates, so they can have a great Christmas. Now, our hope is that once COVID ends, we can begin an ongoing ministry at Rikers Island, even though we're not sure what that might look like yet. But let me ask you this, would you ever have thought when you move to New York City, that you could be helping prisoners in New York City at Rikers Island?

Well, you you can, you can be a part of that. God is good. I mean, just look at what we've been able to be a part of as a church over our first 20 years, it's been exciting to see God do this compassionate work. But the truth is, I know we can do so much more, to fulfill the great compassion. I know that in the coming years, we can build off of these initial successes, and you can be a part of it. Let me show you how here's the next step to building your life, on the great compassion write this in react when I can to meet immediate needs, react when I can to meet immediate needs. Here's the point, get involved in living out the great compassion.

You know, maybe as I shared earlier, some of the things that God has been doing through our church, maybe God began tugging on your heart in a certain area, and if so that's great. That may be God saying, Hey, this is something that that you need to be a part of. But here's what I want to say. Don't just feel something, do something. Look at what James says in James chapter two, beginning in verse 14. He says, What good isn't your brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith, but don't show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing and you say goodbye, and have a good day, stay warm and eat well, but then you don't give that person any food or clothing? What good does that do?

So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless. You see, James says, It's action that brings our faith and our, our compassion to life. Without action, compassion is dead and and faith is useless. And so let me give you a couple of simple but meaningful ways, you can begin to put that compassion, your feeling into action. One way is to give your time and get involved in one of our upcoming community service projects. We have these opportunities almost every week, here's the journey to do something. We've got several great serving opportunities coming up this month with graffiti community ministries, the upcoming two Saturdays, we're doing free lunch in the park where we're serving meals to the homeless and less fortunate on the Lower East Side. And so you can pick a day, January 22, or the next Saturday, January 29th, this coming Saturday or the next Saturday, all you got to do is on your online connection card, you know begin to fill that out. The first page or two just has your information. But on that third page, the next step you can you can request more information on serving on January 22 or January 29. Pick one and give it a shot. And you'll be with our team and it'll be a meaningful experience. And then you know, you heard me talking about South Africa earlier.

Maybe God is tugging on your heart to go on a future international mission trip. Now. I'm not sure if we're going to be able to make a trip this year because of of COVID but let us know if you're interested and we'll let you know as we get future trip scheduled you can go and serve those children who are in need in South Africa check that on your your connection card will send you more information. Another immediate opportunity to act is for you to give to the now's the time special offering this special offering help support all of these compassion ministries that we've been talking about. Listen, your giving is so important. We've only got two weeks left in the now's the time special offering.

So maybe you've received a beginning of the year bonus and a And you could give from that bonus to the special offering to help us get to our goal. Or maybe just over these next two weeks, you want to make a sacrifice, maybe maybe you go buy Starbucks every morning, it's been \$5 on coffee, instead of spending that \$5. Put it aside for the special offering that's \$5 a day, \$25 a week, that's \$50, you could give them a special offering at the end of the month. But be involved, you can make a difference through your giving. The next week, we're going to fulfill the clothes the naked part of the great compassion, by doing something special, we're going to do a special winter coat drive. And so all that we ask that you bring a good coat next Sunday, it could be a new coat or slightly used coat, it just needs to be in good condition, any coat, bring it next week to our journey services in Times Square the 11am service in Times Square on January 23. And we're going to take those two ministries in need.

And if you can't make the in person service, you can bring it by our offices this week or next week. And we're gonna get them to ministries here in the city, who will get those coats to those who need it just in time for the coldest month of the year. So let me challenge you, as God touches your heart, to show compassion to the least of these respond with action, they find a way to make a difference and really live out the great compassion. And listen, what's really cool is you don't have to do this alone, partner with others in the church. And the impact is so much greater. In fact, that's the next step to living out the great compassion, right this sin and respond with others to meet long term needs, respond with others to meet long term needs. You know, it's great when you can meet a need any need in Jesus name. But what's really cool is when you partner with others and make a difference, not just in the moment, but over a longer period of time.

When you're part of something that lasts that you couldn't have accomplished all by yourself. That's why I love this next verse, Ecclesiastes four nine. And it says this, it says two people are better off than one why? For they can help each other succeed. Because you see together, we can feed and clothe and meet the needs of more people than we could if we were just by ourselves. And we can do it on an ongoing basis, not just once. You know, what I really love is that some of our different ministry partnerships, like I mentioned graffiti are going on 20 years.

Some of our partnerships like Rikers Island, they're just getting started. But what's been so gratifying is that we've had different people to step up and take ownership of these different ministries. You know, we've had volunteer coordinators, you've led many of these ministers, we have a volunteer coordinator for graffiti when we do free lunch in the park. Then we have a growth group almost every semester that's focused on graffiti, they do their regular growth from study, but then they serve maybe once a month with the free lunch in the park, if you're interested in that sign up for that growth group. We have a team that coordinates our South Africa ministry. It's not me that does that. But our team, we have a growth for this meeting this semester for the relief bus and other ministry that we partner with here in the inner city. They help feed the homeless and take toiletries and things to people who are in need another one for Father's heart ministry, another ministry in downtown Manhattan that works with the least of these. And yes, there are some ministries that we have that we dried as a staff because they're new, like our work with the Moscow evangelical Christian seminary. But probably someone in our church will be leading and guiding that partnership soon. Some of you will take the step and start participating in some of these compassion ministries this year.

Then maybe your next step is that God wants you to step up and take ownership of one of these ministries and start leading in one of these ministries. And I can't wait to see it. So let us know if if you you know if you want to do that if God is leading you to do that. If you want to build your life on the great compassion. Remember God's compassion for you. Recognize the needs around you react to the immediate needs, and then respond with others to meet long term needs. And then finally write this in. refocus my attention on eternity. Here's the final step to building your life on the great compassion. refocus my attention on eternity. You know, and in the great compassion, Jesus says that, whenever we give to those who are in need, we're doing something supernatural, something that doesn't just have a temporary physical impact, but something that has an eternal spiritual impact as well. And when you serve someone in need in Jesus's name, you're going to be blessed in return, not just temporarily blessed, but you're going to receive rewards in heaven.

I love what Jesus says in Matthew chapter six, beginning in verse 19. Look at Jesus's words. He said Don't store up treasures here on Earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. In other words, you say if you live for yourself and you're just accumulating for yourself, it's a treasure that's not going to last forever. But then he says this, store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. See, unfortunately, we sometimes get so caught up in the temporary things of life, that we lose sight of what's really most important. That's why the Bible reminds us over and over again, don't think temporary, think eternal. And see, if you're just focusing on today, you'll see the people who are in need around you, you're going to see them as being in your way as an inconvenience as a drain. But if you will focus on eternity, you're going to begin to see them as God sees, you're gonna begin to see the

people around you as broken individuals who are desperately in need of the love of God. And if you're focusing on eternity, you're not going to worry about opening your hand to give to those in need. Because you know, that when you do that, God's going to fill your hand up with even more because he can trust you to live out to great compassion. And to give even more to those around you. Let's say if you're focusing on eternity, you're gonna see that meeting the needs of the poor. It isn't just a physical or financial investment. But it's a spiritual eternal investment, and you're storing up treasures for yourself in heaven. In the end, when you smile, or you say a kind word to a person in need. Or you get to the special offering even though it's a sacrifice, or you offer two hours of your life to volunteer on Sunday to to feed a meal to someone who is homeless, or you give a coat and next week's coat drive. When you do that you're not wasting your effort. You're making an investment in eternity. Because just as you minister to those in need, you're ministering to Jesus Himself.

Our final verse is Matthew chapter 25, verse 40, let's close the day by reading Jesus's words out loud together, wherever you're joining us for Church Online. Read this with me today beginning with I tell you the truth. Are you ready? Go. I tell you the truth. When you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you are doing it to me? Would you bow your heads with me right now. And let's pray together if you would bow your head and close your eyes, and let this be a time between between you and God. And Father, we come to you today. Help us to remember that when we serve the least of these however we do it. We're also serving you. We're making a real difference in their lives, but we're also storing up treasure in heaven. God, may we be a church that is built on the great compassion. And may we live our lives also based on the great compassion. And listen if you're here today, and maybe you've never opened your own life up to the God's love and compassion for you. Don't leave here today without personally receiving God's love. Just if you're ready to step across the line and get right with God. Just pray the simple prayer in your heart as I prayed out loud out loud. God, thank you for loving me, even when I didn't deserve it. Forgive me of my sin. God today I confess my belief in Jesus and I commit to following Him as the leader of my life. Thank you for coming into my life and saving me. It's in Jesus' name that we pray. Amen.