

COMPASSION IN ACTION

Matthew 14:13–21; James 1:22–27 (ESV)

*13 Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. 14 When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick. 15 Now when it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a desolate place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves." 16 But Jesus said, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." 17 They said to him, "We have only five loaves here and two fish." 18 And he said, "Bring them here to me." 19 Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass, and taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. 20 And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over. 21 And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children." - **Matthew 14:13–21***

22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. 24 For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. 25 But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

*26 If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. 27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world." - **James 1:22–27***

INTRODUCTION:

In Matthew 14, Jesus shows compassion to the hungry crowd and meets their needs. In James 1, believers are called not only to hear the Word but to live it out through care for the vulnerable. Together, these passages remind us that compassion is not just a feeling, but it is action. This call is also lived out through the ministries of the Diocese of Singapore, such as SAMH and SACS, where compassion becomes visible in care for the elderly and vulnerable. Singapore is also facing a pressing reality: it is the fastest ageing nation in the Asia Pacific after Japan, with the population aged 65 and above reaching 21% this year, 2026! In such a context, the church's call to compassion and care is more urgent than ever, reminding us that the ageing population needs our love, presence, and faithful service.

DISCUSS:

1. Seeing: Compassion in Heart

Matthew 14:14 tells us that when Jesus saw the crowd, He was moved with compassion for their hunger and sickness. Compassion begins when we allow our hearts to be stirred by the needs we see, rather than turning away. In our Diocese, this same compassion is lived out through the Nursing Homes, Active Ageing Centres, and Senior Care Centres, where the elderly and vulnerable are noticed, valued, and cared for. It is a posture of openness, where we allow God to shape our vision to see people not as burdens but as beloved children of God.

How can you ask God to reshape your vision so that you see people not as burdens but as beloved children of God?

2. Caring: Living Out the Care

Compassion that begins in the heart must naturally flow outward into action. It is not enough to feel concern, we are called to embody care in the way we live each day. Not merely a feeling, but a vital quality to be embodied in daily life. James reminds us in verse 1:22 that faith is incomplete if we only hear the Word but do not put it into practice. This care is expressed in pastoral concern, much like in James 1:27, where visiting and supporting the vulnerable reflects pure religion. In our Diocese, this is seen in the daily work of pastoral care within Nursing Homes, Active Ageing Centres, and Senior Care Centres, where compassion is lived out through presence, listening, and practical support.

What small, practical step can you take this week to live out care among the elderly, the lonely, or the vulnerable in your community?

3. Serving: Following Example of Christ

In Matthew 14:19, Jesus took the loaves and fish, blessed them, and gave them to the disciples to serve the crowd. His compassion moved into concrete action, He served by meeting their needs. Serving means following Jesus' example, putting others before ourselves, and trusting that God multiplies what we offer. It is a lifestyle of humility, where we give without seeking recognition, and where our service becomes a living testimony of Christ's love. In the Diocese, this call is lived out through the outreach mission of SAMH and SACS, inviting us to join in caring for the elderly and vulnerable. You can be part of this mission of compassion and service as well.

How does Jesus' example of serving challenge your own comfort zones and call you into deeper acts of service?

Pray:

1. For Compassionate Hearts:

Lord Jesus, open our eyes to see the needs around us. Soften our hearts to be moved with Your compassion, that we may see people as You see them, beloved and precious in Your sight.

2. For Caring in Action:

Father, make us doers of the Word. Guard us from empty religion that hears but does not act. Teach us to live out care in practical ways, especially among the elderly, the lonely, and the vulnerable in our community.

3. For Christ-like Service:

Holy Spirit, empower us to serve as Jesus served. Give us humility to serve without seeking recognition, and perseverance to sustain compassion as a lifestyle. May our service in nursing homes and community ministries be a living testimony of Christ's love.