



Title: Ministering to Christ in the Midst of Disaster
Theme: Loving Christ by Ministering to His Disciples and Having Compassion on the Hurting

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’” (Matthew 25:34-40)

Hurricane Katrina gives the church a great opportunity to show her love to the Lord Jesus Christ and show the world a church that is pleasing to God

Our nation has just experienced what many are saying is the worst natural disaster America has ever seen. According to an e-mail that I received from Pastor Rick Warren, of Saddle Back Church, hundreds of thousands of people have lost literally everything they own. More than 1 million people are without a home to live in right now. Hurricane Katrina has caused more than \$100 billion in damage.

I would propose to you that through this disaster, the church has a great opportunity to show her love to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is our opportunity to show the world a church that is pleasing to God. James writes, “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress...” (James 1:27a) Jesus can be ministered to and God will be pleased with the church that reaches out in compassion to those who are in distress from Hurricane Katrina.

Just how can Christians minister to Christ and be a witness to a people that are in distress?

The results of Hurricane Katrina is an opportunity to show love to Christ through practical means in meeting the needs of those affected by this tragedy, this includes the children of God and the lost.

Matthew 25:34-40 says, “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’”

It is best translated in the New American Standard Bible as “...Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.” Jesus identifies Himself here with the human family. This includes the Christians who are poor, persecuted, and companions in suffering. “...The least of these...” here is like the answer Jesus gave the expert of the law when he asked, “who is my neighbor?” Then Jesus spoke the parable of the “Good Samaritan.” Our neighbor is who ever needs the ministry of mercy and helps. “The least of these” includes the poorest, the most despised and afflicted. (Barnes Notes; The Pulpit Commentary; William Barclay; Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon)

This ministry involves a whole lot more than just shouting, raising hands, dancing, singing and the preaching of God’s Word in beautiful buildings. This involves getting your hands dirty, a little sweat, spending some money, some time and some risk taking.

The story has often been told of the man who was at a prayer meeting. He was praying asking God to show His hand upon a man who had a great need. He soon stopped, stood up and left the prayer meeting. Later, one of the deacons asked him if he was ill, the brother who left said, “No, I felt in my spirit that someone said, you go and be My hand.” So he went and did his part to meeting the need of the man he was praying for.

It does no good for us to pray for a man to be well fed, clothed, and have shelter, if we have the means to help him and not do anything to provide food, clothing and shelter. If we have the food, clothing and the shelter, then God gave it to us and He expects us to use it for His glory.

The first thing we are to do as we enter into this battle of meeting the needs of those who are suffering from Hurricane Katrina is to pray.

The first thing we are to do as we enter into this battle of meeting the needs of those who are suffering from Hurricane Katrina is to pray. Ephesians

6:18 says to "...pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints." We are to be specific in our prayers knowing that the prayers of a righteous man are powerful and effective. (James 5:16)

When James wrote about the power of prayer he gave the prophet Elijah as an example so that we may be encouraged to come to the Lord in prayer. Elijah prayed earnestly (*proseuche*) meaning with warm intense prayer. He prayed for "...it not to rain and did not for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced crops." (James 1:5:17-18)

Christians have the Holy Spirit of God indwelling them and they can pray intensely for the will of God to be done, with the same passion as Elijah did. They can expect great things to happen. James says Elijah was a man just like you and I. He had the same passions as you and I do, he overcame non-belief that often pulls on us and he prayed with belief to the God he served.

Those who are on the front lines meeting the needs of the victims of Hurricane Katrina are requesting prayer for. 1.) Protection for the relief workers. 2.) That the Lord would make the churches effective in helping the communities that are affected by the disaster. 3.) He would work on the hearts of business owners around the country who may donate the much-needed supplies to the region. 4.) Give pastors wisdom and insight as they attempt to lead their congregations to minister in the Gulf Coast Region. 5.) That the Lord would make Christians in the area sensitive to the urgent spiritual questions being asked by victims. 6.) That the Lord would provide the churches with the resources to meet the incredible needs they are encountering. The request for prayer came with this notation, "Nothing your church does right now is more valuable than time spent in prayer." (Prayer request put together by Purpose Drive Pastor.com)

Through prayer we are to get guidance on how to meet the practical needs of those in distress.

Through prayer we are to get guidance on how to meet the practical needs of those in distress. The first need to be met is food and drink and it should be given in a way that shows the life of Christ is living through us.

Without food and water, man cannot survive long especially in tough conditions. The stress of loss weakens a man physically, mentally and spiritually. He must get food and water quickly or he will be in great danger. He cannot think straight, work hard or regain control of his life without proper nourishment. The Christian needs to be open and willing in order for the Lord to make the way for him to be a part of meeting the need of the hungry.

Paul Fritz shared the true story about a family that always prayed at the meal saying this, "Come Lord Jesus be our guest and let this food be a blessing to us." One day the smallest boy in the family looked up at dad and said, "Dad, every evening we ask Jesus to come and be our guest, but He never comes." His father said, "We can only wait for Him to appear!" The little boy thought for a moment and said, "Well, then if we expect Him to come and have dinner with us, why don't we set a place for Him at the table?" Wanting to make the little boy happy, his mother set out extra silverware, a plate and a cup at the end of the table. Not long after the place was set, they heard a knock at the door. When the door was opened they saw a poor man who was hungry. The little boy looked at his father and said, "Jesus could not come today but He sent this poor man in His place." The man was invited in and he enjoyed a good meal. This family saw this as an appointment directly from the Lord, so the family shared about Jesus, what He just did and what He had done in their family. The poor homeless man accepted Christ into his heart and life.

It is those who set a place at the table for the hungry, they are the ones who minister to Christ through feeding of the hungry. There are many in this nation today who are still in need of food and water in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Provide shelter for the homeless

Jesus teaches that those who minister to the hungry minister to Him and so do those who provide shelter for the homeless.

In this sin cursed world a lot of bad things happen and there are many needs that should be met by the Body of Christ for the sake of the gospel. Many great proclaimers of God's Word have discovered the joy of ministering to the homeless.

Brett Blair, of Sermons.com shared about C. H. Spurgeon, who once a year held a special meeting to raise money for his orphans. Many would come to hear the messages Pastor Spurgeon preached and they would give abundantly to this work of the Lord, which housed orphans. After one of those meetings a "super spiritual," narrow minded, nitpicking individual sharply addressed Charles Spurgeon saying, "Why, Mr. Spurgeon, I thought you preached for souls and not for money!" Spurgeon gravely replied, "Normally I do preach for souls and not for money. But these orphans can't eat souls and if they did, my brother, it would take at least four with the size of your heart to give one of those children a square meal!"

We are told that there are 1 million people who are homeless after Hurricane Katrina made her way through the 90,000 square acres of land on American soil. The church that wants to minister to Christ will be involved in

some way of providing shelter to the homeless with a big heart full of sacrificial love.

Ministering to Christ and is providing clothes to the needy

Providing shelter for the needy is ministering to Christ and so is providing clothes. There is a blessing from the Lord given to those who make sure that the needy are provided with clothes so as to withstand all conditions that they face in this life.

Sermon Central staff provided this story of an Englishwoman named Anita Goulden. In 1958 she went on a holiday to Peru to visit her brother. Just as she was about to go home she saw an unbelievable sight—children who were sick and needing clothing. She writes in her diary, “In my wildest dream, I had never thought of human beings in such shocking conditions.”

Anita never made it home except one time and that was to purchase medicine. For 44 years she stayed. She had an unwavering faith in God’s capacity to answer desperate intense prayer for food, clothing and housing when there was none for the children. God used her to provide permanent care for the most afflicted of the children. It was said of Anita, “She has a direct line to God,” and others said, “Thank God for the British [and her].”

Many in the southern part of the USA are still without the proper clothes for the up coming months. Many, I am told only have the clothes that are on their backs. What an opportunity for the church to minister to Christ by making sure people have the clothes they need. When people are ministered to in the right spirit, God gets the glory.

Ministry to Christ is ministering to the sick

Clothing the needy for the right reasons is ministry to Christ and so is ministering to the sick. Compassion must issue deeds.

This is so powerfully illustrated to us in the parable of the “Good Samaritan.” We are to help all who are afflicted with physical suffering and illnesses.

Pastor Gregory Griffin shared the true story of three individuals who went the distance. They opened their eyes and hearts and offered their skills and hands to service for Jesus Christ. Their names were Kathy Gariety, Bill Koehn, and Martha Myers. It was said of Kathy Gariety, “She knew that faith in God, meant trusting God, no matter what, no matter when, no matter where.” Kathy was purchasing manager for the Jibla Baptist Hospital in Yemen.

Of Bill Koehn it was said, “He preached with his life and expressed compassion.” Bill Koehn was Administrator of Jibla Baptist Hospital in Yemen.

Of Martha Myers it was said, "Martha was a victorious Christian. She had no life of her own; it was of the Lord Jesus Christ." Martha was a Doctor at Jibla Baptist Hospital in Yemen.

All three were missionaries and their ultimate and most important mission was to reach the lost for Christ as they gave medical care to the needy in Yemen. These three individuals were involved in ministering to Christ for they opened their eyes to the need, their hearts to the sick, offered their lives and skills through practical health care to those who suffered and were in need of medical attention. In December, the year I do not remember, they paid the ultimate price as all three were killed by a Muslim extremist while they were in a staff meeting at the hospital in Yemen.

It cost the Good Samaritan something to be a good neighbor to the man who fell upon the unmerciful hands of robbers and who was in need of medical attention. It will cost everyone something to become involved with the health care of someone who has health problems, especially ongoing health problems. It will cost you time, strength and money to administer the love of Christ to the sick.

It is costing a lot of workers of their own finances, strength and time away from their families in order to get those who have been physically afflicted by the unmerciful hand of Hurricane Katrina to proper medical facilities. The church must take this time to minister to Christ by participating in some way to help the physically injured and sick.

Our response to the poor, persecuted, despised, afflicted, sick and those in suffering is a reflection to our relationship with Him

This parable spoken by Jesus Christ is crystal clear. Our response to the poor, persecuted, despised, afflicted, sick and those in suffering is a reflection to our relationship with Him. James writes, "What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, 'You have faith; I have deeds.' Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do." (James 2:14-18)

God's judgment will not be finalized by the knowledge we have assumed, the fame we have acquired or the fortune we have gained. No, it is how we show our love to Him in response of His love shown to us. Our love must be expressed through meeting the needs of others.

In an article sent out by Pastor Rick Warren, the church is asked to get involved. There is a good chance that in about a month many short-term relief organizations will be slacking off and funds will slow down. Although it is of great help to send money and food now to those affected by Hurricane Katrina, the fact is that those affected will need long term help. The church must become caring

distribution centers that can offer practical help in providing ways to get food, shelter, and make sure the physically injured and sick get real help.

This is much more than a wakeup call to a nation that has turned her back on God, it is an opportunity for the church to express Biblical love to Christ by meeting the needs of Christians and of those who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ and His love. We must join with the churches that are much more than just talk, but walk in accordance with the will of God. It will take a step of faith, which involves action that enables the church to be a part of what God is doing right now.

I had the privilege to speak on the phone with Jim Difford who is working with the Louisiana Baptist Convention. In the midst of disaster they and many other churches are getting to minister to Christ by meeting the needs of the hungry, providing shelter, clothing and helping the physically afflicted. And they are seeing God do a work through them.

On Wednesday, September 7, they had received a call from a truck driver, saying that he had a truckload of supplies and he needed someone to meet him at the airport as soon as possible, meaning today. They had no place for the food to go, no truck to pick it up or the help to get the job done.

In less than five minutes a call came in from Houma, Louisiana, a town about three hours away, saying they needed supplies as soon as possible. The amount of supplies requested was the exact amount and type of supplies that was on that truck. Now, they were really praying and seeking the Lord for help because they have supplies, a need, and no way of getting it to the people.

In five minutes they received a phone call from a man, saying that he was available to help fly supplies were they needed it, however, he was somewhat limited on money to buy fuel. In another five minutes they received another phone call from a pastor of a church, offering \$5,000.00 to go to an immediate need. In around fifteen minutes they saw the Lord give supplies, make the arrangements and provide the funds to meet the need of a group of people who have been afflicted by one of the worse storms to do damage on American soil.

The Holy Spirit's call is to first pray, have ears to listen and then obey what the Lord would have us do as a church so we can minister to Christ by meeting the needs of the hurting, the homeless and the discouraged. We have a great opportunity to join the many churches that are being a part of what God is doing in America right now.

Let us Pray!!!