Monday, August 3, 2026

This past Sunday, the scripture spoke of Jesus having compassion for the crowds who followed him around the lake. They were seeking healing. They also needed feeding.

What does scripture mean by compassion? The definition of compassion in Greek is actually to have the bowels, yearn, to feel sympathy, pity.

The Greek word used in the Bible is splagchnizomai. Quite literally, the inward parts. Jesus felt for the people in his guts. We would say that we feel something in our heart but in the ancient world people felt in their bowels. This was the seat of intense emotions. You know, to feel something in your gut.

There is actually a scientific understanding of the link between our gut and our brain. The latest studies on microbes in our guts tells us that gut microbiota helps to regulate many of our brain's functions. No wonder we are told to eat for our gut health! The microbes in your intestines can directly effect your nervous system and vice versa.

When you feel strong emotions for others, you are feeling it in your splagchinizomai. When that happens, we need to act on those feelings.

In the gospel of Matthew, after spending much time teaching, Jesus began a healing ministry. He heals many at Peter's house, he calms the storm, he casts out demons, he heals a paralytic, brings a girl to life, heals a woman, two blind men and a mute. He also calls his disciples. He feeds many and continues teaching. He walks on water and calms a storm (again).

Then in chapter 16 he says that the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few. There is almost an urgency to his words. He knows his time is short but there are so many people to reach, to teach, and to heal. And he feels compassion for the crowds because they are harassed and helpless.

We are part of the laborers sent to the harvest. We are Jesus' hands and feet. Sometimes we have to listen, not to peers or to our heads but to our inward parts. If we find ourselves feeling compassion, we need to act on that feeling.

Just like Jesus.

My problem is that sometimes I feel compassion, I say a prayer, and then I find myself not taking further action. Thoughts and prayers probably are not what God is calling me to. God wants action in the field. I think maybe acting on your gut feelings is probably healthier than ignoring them or making excuses.

When have you felt compassion but neglected to act on that feeling? Did you then feel guilty? Did you ever do something about that feeling? How can we move forward and be more like Jesus?

Trust your gut this week!
Amelia