

## “My Sympathy is Stirred”

*Companion Paper to the Sermon Delivered at Firm Foundation Christian Church,  
Woonsocket, RI, on August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020, By James Moriello*

**“My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred.”** (Hosea 11:8, NKJV)

In the context of this verse, God is pleading with Israel (Hosea 11:1-11). The nation had walked away from God. But God hadn't walked away from the nation. Maybe you have walked away from God. But God hasn't walked away from you. His unfailing love is such that He will be ready with open arms to welcome anyone who comes to Him. The Lord sees your case this morning, and He reaches out through His Son Jesus, that for you it may be said, **“And out of Egypt I called My Son. My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred”** (Hosea 11:1,11). This morning, we shall look at two things which are inextricably intertwined; God's compassionate heart, and God's compassionate response.

Many people view God as the God of judgment in the Old Testament, but the God of compassion in the New Testament. But this is only half true on both counts. He is the same God, with attributes of perfect judgment and perfect compassion **“yesterday, today, and forever”** (Hebrews 13:8). We have been preaching through Hosea for a month now, and we have had many hard things to say, but now as we conclude our brief series, let us do with a high note of great hope. For our God, the God of great hope, always has compassion to spare for all, even you.

In Hosea's day, God's people had wandered into sin, and they found themselves in some trouble. And this troubled Him. Do you think that your Creator does not care about you? He most certainly does care. Of you also He says, **“My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred.”** **“Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus. Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need”** (Hebrews 3:1, 4:14-16). Indeed, our Lord Jesus did say, **“All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out”** (John 6:37). Do you need compassion today? Do you feel damaged or dirty? Are you just plain lonely and feeling depressed by these times? Do you feel like you are hanging on by just a little thread of faith? **“A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench”** (Isaiah 42:3).

The Savior Himself shall look upon you and say, “My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred.”

Jesus is our Spiritual Savior and Good Samaritan. Most of us know the story. “A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him” (Luke 10:30-34). You may be broken, but God will bind you up. When your cry for divine help goes up, His compassionate help comes down, for His “sympathy is stirred.” “So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?” And he said, “He who showed mercy on him.” Then Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise”” (Luke 10:36-37).

How might we imitate the divine action with human action? “But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh” (Jude 20-23). Just as our Lord has done for us, we must love the sinner and hate the sin. Let us be “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Let us act with compassion toward the sinner, but avoid calling the sin natural or good, and also avoid being caught up in the sin ourselves.

There was a day when a certain woman was caught in sin, a sexual sin, the act of adultery. Listen carefully to Jesus’ response, and see how He handled things. “Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, “Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?” This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear. So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, “He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.” And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the

woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, “Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?” She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said to her, “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.”” (John 8:3-11). Note the following. There was no question that a sin had been committed. The woman raised no objection that she could not help it, because God made her that way. She didn’t even try to blame the devil like Eve did. She owned up to it. The Lord’s writing on the ground calls our attention to God’s written word. Everyone there was a sinner except Jesus. Finally, and most importantly, let us note that Jesus had a compassionate response toward the sinner, but a firm response to the sin. Jesus took hard stands compassionately. There are two extremes with Christians today. The first is taking a hard stand without compassion. The second is not taking a stand in the name of compassion. Neither one is the right way. We must take hard stands compassionately, just as our Lord did. Thank God He has taken a hard stand compassionately with us. The Spirit has convicted us of our sin, that’s the hard stand. The Son has paid the penalty to reconcile us to the Father, that’s the compassion of Christ. Do you want this compassion today? It is available to all, and it is available to you. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:16-17).