

# To The Least

Long Beach Alliance Church • August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2012 • Pastor Chris Lankford

**Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation 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; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to 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? And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' "The King will answer and say to them, '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.**

**~Matthew 25:34-40 (NASB)**

## 1) The Church And Compassion

- A) Jesus Christ clearly cared for those who were sick and hungry out of a compassionate heart (Matthew 14:14-21).
- B) Jesus challenged His followers to show compassion to others through acts of mercy and kindness, even noting that lacking compassion for those who are hungry, thirsty, strangers, naked, sick, and in prison is a sign of unbelief and failure to love Jesus (Matthew 25:31-46).

- C) Perhaps most memorable is Jesus' teaching about the "Good Samaritan" (Luke 10:25-37). While the context of this teaching story targets ethnic prejudices, it also reveals Jesus' mindset of maintaining balance between compassion for those in need and legitimate religious practices.
- D) Jesus' missional church also taught and practiced a ministry of compassion (James 2:1-9; Acts 6:1-6; 1<sup>st</sup> John 3:17-18). Bottom line: Compassion Ministries are very important!

## 2) Compassion Or Evangelism? Which Gets Priority?

- A) The Bible recognizes that the works we do authenticates the message which we deliver (James 2:14-17). We also understand that part of "making disciples" is evangelism, sharing Good News with pre-Christians (Matthew 28:19-20).
- B) So which receives priority? Do we lead with compassion for the purposes of evangelism? If we can't evangelize, do we serve the world? Is the purpose of our serving even meant for delivering the Gospel message? All good questions!
- C) If a church never had compassion ministries, would it still be a church? But before you answer that question, consider another: If a church doesn't deliver the Gospel, would it still be a church? Wisdom from God is needed (James 1:5-8)!
- D) Some churches go to the extremes. Some preach or teach compassion, but only study serving the world. Others only serve the world, while teaching a watered-down "social gospel" of service to others.
- E) Of course, the fact is that the Gospel and compassion are inseparable (James 2:18-26). To follow Christ is to say we are overwhelmed with compassion for a fallen world.
- F) Thus, as we learn to "Love God" (Bible Teaching), and we learn to "Love Others" (Growth Groups), we are also learning to "Serve the World" (Compassionate Outreach). As as our church family learns missional living together, we get to "Love God, Love Others, and Serve the World" in everything we say and do -- an exciting future at LBAC!