



DAILY DEVOTIONAL FRIDAY BIBLE STUDY FOR FEBRUARY 1, 2013

## IN THE MIDST OF THE CROWD

*We [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. (Matthew 9:36, NIV)*

LET ME COME RIGHT OUT AND SAY IT: I love an empty golf course. On a recent late winter afternoon, with only about an hour of daylight left to play, I stood on the second tee and looked over the whole front nine. Not a soul. It really is a very cool thing to be able to whisper, “I have the whole golf course to myself.” (Never mind that there were still a few souls finishing up the back nine; I would not be getting that far.)

That revealed, we are not people meant to live alone. God exists in Trinitarian force—an everlasting dance, some theologians have called it. And when Jesus came to earth, while he notably escaped to the hills for prayerful conversation with the Father, he made room for the crowds. These were the people who needed what he offered.

So they came. Often for healing. But for teaching, too. And sometimes to eat and drink and simply talk.

But what is so significant is that these crowds did not bother the contemplative Jesus. In fact, sometimes he went with purpose to where they were.

In Matthew 9 alone, a woman long suffering with internal bleeding pushed up against Jesus in a crowd. He noted her bold act and healed her. He gave blind men their sight and cast out a demon, and “the crowd was amazed and said, ‘Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel.’” Then he “went through all the towns and villages,” teaching and preaching and healing. Jesus knew the needs of the crowd, and he walked among them.

And then we come to the verse we have highlighted today, where Jesus’ heart aches for the people. They were desperate, confused, lost. They needed his touch; they needed his life.

We can, as self-proclaimed followers of Jesus, separate ourselves from those who need Jesus most. But then we would not be followers of Jesus at all. For Jesus went to those needing compassion, and he gave it to them generously.

### Opening questions: Alone and together

Where do you go for times of quiet? How about when you want to be with others? What’s the most uncomfortable crowd experience you can imagine?

### Through the crowd

*Read Mark 2:1-12.* Consider the details of this story. Note how Jesus saw through the crowd to the needs of the individual. What makes it hard for us to do this? How might we become more attentive in this way?

---

---

---

While we may not be able to offer miraculous healing as Jesus did (though many remarkable miracles still happen in our time), what can we do for people who are “lost in a crowd?” What gifts do we have to give them?

---

---

---

### Finding compassion

*Read Matthew 9:35-38.* What responses do we often offer to the needy other than compassion? How can we change this pattern in our hearts and lives?

---

---

---

### Giving and receiving

*Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-15.* What further lessons do we find here for our ongoing compassion-ignited generosity? What do you need to move past in your own thinking in order to become a more Christlike compassionate person?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2013 Links Players International.