



new life fellowship

Sermon Title: **Lent Sermon Series – What is God Like? Compassionate**

Speaker: **Rich Villodas – Lead Pastor**

Scriptures: **Exodus 34:5-7, Exodus 3:7-8**

### **Exodus 34:5-7**

<sup>5</sup> Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD. <sup>6</sup> And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, <sup>7</sup> maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.”

### **Exodus 3:7-8**

<sup>7</sup> The LORD said, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. <sup>8</sup> So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites.

### **Sermon Summary:**

This Sunday, Pastor Rich will continue our Lenten series, What is God Like? We will take a deep look at God's compassion to better learn what it means to be in relationship with God, with others, and with ourselves.

### **Sermon Questions:**

1. Pastor Rich shared that compassion is not our natural response and is difficult because we try and avoid, numb, and distract ourselves from the pain around us. What is your biggest obstacle to extending compassion to others?
2. He also shared our tendency to categorize and calculate who deserves compassion and who doesn't as seen in the world around us. What categories have you experienced, seen or made that determine who is and is not deserving of compassion?
3. In Exodus God describes himself as compassionate. He saw the Hebrew people's affliction, heard their cry, knew their sorrows and said he was coming to rescue them (Ex. 3:7-8). Do you believe God is compassionate and responsive to your pain, sorrow and cries? Why or why not?
4. Please refer to our Lenten Study Guide for further questions and reflection.



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CHURCHWIDE LENTEN 2024 BIBLE STUDY

what is  
**GOD**  
like?

WEEKLY STUDY GUIDE



## Session 2: Compassionate | “RAḤḤŪM” | רַחֻם

### IMMERSE

After reading the introduction for this session, read Isaiah 49:13-16. What is God sharing about his character? Read Exodus 15:22-17:7, then Matthew 14:13-21 (see also Matthew 15:32-38). Do you see some commonalities between the Exodus and Matthew passages? How do these passages align with God's character as described in the Isaiah passage?

### INTRODUCTION

The word used here for Compassion “רַחֻם” or “rehoum” (in some versions, it is translated as Merciful) is very directly connected to the word for Womb “רֶחֶם” or “reham” in Hebrew. In translation, we miss the connection which would have been obvious to the original audience every time they saw or heard these scriptures recited. Since both man and woman are made in his image, it follows that God is not only our heavenly father; he is also our divine parent who ascribes to himself the characteristics of motherhood.

This word points to that intense experience at the intersection of love, creation, and responsive action that is most vividly seen in the bond between mother and child. A woman's entire self (physically, mentally, emotionally) is redirected for months to create and prepare for a child, and then reoriented again by birth and caring for a newborn. A mother's attention and thoughts are consumed by the needs of her new baby. Nursing women have physical responses to their crying child, as recognized in Isaiah 49:13-16, although both scripture and our own lives testify that this depth of a mother's love is not limited to biological connections.

### INTRODUCTION (cont.)

This special relationship is recognized across cultures and the centuries - even across species within creation. By using this particular word repeatedly to describe himself, God is assuring us that the bond between mother and infant mirrors a central aspect of the sacred relationship between God and humans: God feels tender care toward the people he has created and is deeply moved in response to their needs. We see throughout the Old and the New Testament that even when the strongest human love fails, God cannot and will not ignore the cries of his people.

Throughout the gospels, we read about Jesus being deeply moved with compassion again and again. As we look at the gospel passage for this week, this deep, tender love of God cries out through Jesus in his final days in Jerusalem.



## Scripture Passages

### **ISAIAH 49:13-16 (NIV)**

*Read together*

13 Shout for joy, you heavens;  
rejoice, you earth;  
burst into song, you mountains!  
For the LORD comforts his people  
and will have compassion on his afflicted ones.

14 But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me,  
the Lord has forgotten me."

15 "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast  
and have no compassion on the child she has borne?  
Though she may forget,  
I will not forget you!

16 See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands;  
your walls are ever before me.

### **MATTHEW 23:37-39 (NIV)**

*Read together*

37 "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. 38 Look, your house is left to you desolate. 39 For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"



## Session 2: Compassionate (cont.)

### OPENING QUESTION

Have you ever cared for a baby of any kind (ex. a puppy or chick)? What was that experience like?

### INVESTIGATE

1. Why do you think Jesus chose to describe himself as a hen rather than a rooster? What meaning might be lost if he used the rooster in this metaphor?
2. Jesus voices strong emotions and language in this passage from Matthew 23. Reflect together on what we get to see here and in other places, how Scripture records Jesus not only doing things on behalf of people but feeling deeply (weeping before healing Lazarus, showing anguish to Peter, James, and John in the Garden of Gethsemane before the cross)
3. What is Jesus trying to tell the people of Jerusalem about his intentions towards them?
4. Assign volunteers one of the following verses and take a moment to read them individually: Mark 1:40-41, Luke 7:12-14, John 11:33. In each of these verses, what circumstances moved Jesus deeply?

### INTEGRATE

Our earthly parent/parental relationships in our lives can affect our ability to connect with God as a compassionate parent. Depending on our experience, it can make it easier for some to believe God would be compassionate to us, and for others, it can make it harder to imagine a God who cares tenderly for us and our needs.

How hard or easy is it to imagine God as a loving, responsive parent? What was your relationship with your parent(s)/primary caregiver like and what correlations do you see, if any?

### INVITE

Take a couple of minutes as a group to pause in silence and reflect on God's personal invitation to you with either of the questions below. Afterward, take turns sharing with the following prompt.

Consider your answer to the last question.

If you struggle to see God as a tender caregiver, where in your life can you ask God to show up as a compassionate parent?

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## Session 2: Compassionate (cont.)

### INVITE (cont.)

If you can more easily see God as a loving parent, how can you “Be compassionate just as your Father is compassionate,” this week? (Luke 6:36).

Take turns sharing in a sentence or two, starting with the prompt “I’m beginning to realize \_\_\_\_\_.”

### CLOSING PRAYER

Each person can briefly pray for one other person’s invitation to grow in knowing God as a compassionate parent. Make sure to clarify who is praying for whom, and summarize in one sentence the prayer request before you begin. The group leader can close the prayer time.