**Week 5 Video**

**Opening our actions to your compassion**

In the most recent version of the film *Ben Hur*, Pontius Pilate is discussing the threats to the Roman Empire in first-century Palestine. At that time, it was the zealots, the revolutionary Jewish group attempting to overthrow Roman rule, who were the greatest worry to the authorities. But Pilate’s concern was rather an obscure Jewish prophet called Jesus of Nazareth, who was teaching people that love is the true nature of every person. Pilate concludes with these words: “this man calms people with his compassion – he is more dangerous than all of the zealots combined”.

Like the word love, “compassion” is another word that’s rather lost its power in recent years. We so often hear politicians, journalists, and world leaders use the word. Sometimes it can seem a rather insipid and bland way of saying that we should be nice and kind to people. The reality is, though, that the call of compassion is a revolutionary call. Compassion demands that we treat others, whoever they are, whatever they’ve done, as if they were in our families, that we share both their joys and their sorrows. This is a radical way of viewing the world around us. Indeed, it even goes beyond human relationships and challenges our attitudes to the environment and non-human life.

Not that this radical compassion is an easy choice for us to make in our day-to-day lives. So much so, that we often end up sidelining compassion and taking the less-potent steps of charity, sympathy, or pity. I once watched a documentary where Tom Shadyac, the director of the film *Bruce Almighty*, was interviewing his father, who had founded a hospital for children with cancer. His dad described witnessing so much love and compassion in his church each week. But at the end of the service, so many of the congregation would go out to their cars, go home and just get on with their lives; their compassion will be switched off for the rest of the week. He finishes by describing himself sitting and crying at the end of a service when reflecting on how infrequently we live out God’s compassion. Perhaps we can adapt a quotation by G.K. Chesterton – “it is not that compassion has been tried and found wanting; rather, it has been found difficult and so left untried”.

So I want to challenge you this week to recognise, embrace, and then live out what is radical about compassion. To break through the “us” and “them” attitudes so prevalent in our society. To embrace those who are stigmatised and demonised in our world. To recognise the beauty and worth of God’s creation and of each and every person, whoever they are, whatever their background; to recognise them as our brothers and sisters, to look at them and see Jesus himself looking back at us.