

# Compassionate Living

In a world full of brokenness and sin, we all need compassion. This retreat invites us to look at the compassion of Jesus – and then to look at our lives through this lens.

These notes were written for students and graduates as an invitation to reflect on the year 2021. Since many camps and conferences could not take place due to the pandemic, it was an alternative option to find closure for the year.

These notes can be used to reflect on one year, one term, one month or any other time period you choose.

Please set aside at least two hours for this time of retreat. It is good to have a Bible, notebook, and pen with you, but not your smart phone. Protect this space from interruptions and distractions.

Enjoy spending time with Jesus and his Word!

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## Settling Down

**I look for a place where I can spend the next two hours.** I settle down and enjoy a moment of silence. I become aware of the fact that God is here; I am in his presence.

## On the Path with Jesus – Where am I?

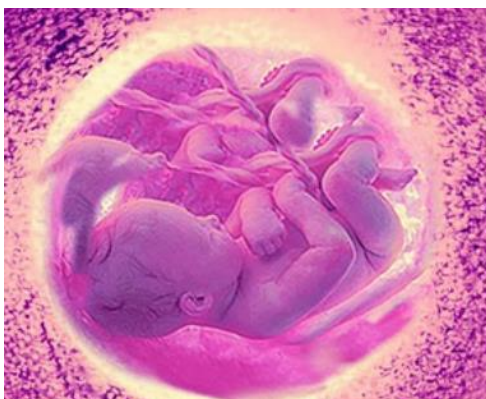
**I read Matthew 20:29-34.**

**Where would I see myself in this story?** What role or place in this story can I identify with most? The blind man on the side of the road? Alone or together with someone else? Crying for mercy and compassion? Already healed? Or as one of the disciples on the road with Jesus? Or as someone from the crowd who is irritated by the cries of others for help? Or somewhere else in the story?

Where do I stand at the end of this month/term/year – in relation to Jesus, to myself, to other people, to ministry? I take some time to look at my life today.

## Looking to Jesus

Some thoughts on how Scripture speaks of God's compassion:



\_The Hebrew word for compassion is linked to the word used for the womb. That is what God's compassion is like: it protects; it is a place of growth, a place out of which new life emerges.

\_Repeatedly, God is described like this in the Old Testament: "*the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness*". (Exodus 34:6; Psalm 86:15; Psalm 103:8; Psalm 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2)

\_God's compassion is not just a feeling that touches him deeply. It includes the willingness to give generously to help those in need. His incarnation reflects his compassion; Zacharias speaks of it like this:

*"through the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace."* (Luke 1:78-79)

**I read Matthew 20:29-34 again.** This time I focus on Jesus – what he does and doesn't do and what this says about his character. What does the compassion of Jesus look like in this story?

What response do I feel invited to give as I reflect on this event?

In the story, the two blind men call out: "Have mercy on *us!*" Not only I need mercy, but also the people around me – *we* need mercy. What difference does it make for me to be aware of this?

## A compassionate look at my past month, term, year

**I look at my past month/term/year through three windows.** The aim is not quantity or completeness, but to prayerfully ask what is meaningful for my life and make just a few notes. And then to talk about this with Jesus – to go to him with my thanks, questions, wonder, requests.

How did I experience compassion – from God or others?

Where was I able to show compassion to others?

Where do I need compassion in my life – for sin, external or internal needs, conflicts in relationships, etc.?



## A hopeful look into the future

**Jesus asks: What do you want me to do for you?** (Matthew 20:32)

I imagine Jesus standing in front of me and asking me this question: What is my answer? I write down a short (!) prayer in which I name 2-3 requests that are particularly on my heart. I bring them to God trusting in his great compassion. Maybe this prayer can accompany me during the next weeks.

## Closure

**I read Matthew 20:29-34 one last time, if possible, out loud.**

This is how Jesus also encounters me. I spend some time in silence in his presence. I can close this retreat time by asking Jesus to help me grow in my capacity to receive and give compassion.