

Jesus' Teachings about Mercy / Compassion / Pity

Biblical Greek Terminology:

Greek	Transliteration	Gram.	Translation	Mark	Matt	Luke	Acts	John	Paul	Cath	Rev	Total
ἐλέεω	eleēō	verb	“to have mercy, compassion”	3	8	4	0	0	12	2	0	29
ἔλεος	éleos	noun	“mercy, compassion”	0	3	6	0	0	11	8	0	27
ἐλεημοσύνη	eleēmosynē	noun	“alms”	0	3	2	8	0	0	0	0	13
σπλαγχνίζω	splanchnizō	verb	“to take pity on, have compassion, be inwardly moved”	4	5	3	0	0	0	0	0	12
σπλάγχνον	splānchnon	noun	lit: “innards, guts, bowels; fig: “heart, affections, sympathy”	0	0	1	1	0	8	1	0	11

Related Words used only once or twice each:

- ἐλεήμων / eleēmōn (adj, 2x) – “merciful, compassionate” (Matt 5:7; Heb 2:17)
- ἐλεινός / eleeinos (adj, 2x) – “pitiable, miserable” (1 Cor 15:19; Rev 3:17)
- ἀνέλεος / aneleos (adj, 1x) – “unmerciful” (Jas 2:13)
- ἀνελεήμονας / aneleēmonas (adj, 1x) – “merciless” (Rom 1:31)
- εὐσπλαγχνος / eusplanchnos (adj, 2x) – “tenderhearted” (Eph 4:32; 1 Petr 3:8)
- πολὺσπλαγχνος / polysplanchnos (adj, 1x) – “very merciful; full of pity” (James 5:11)
- οἰκτίρω / oiktirō (v, 2x) – “to pity, show mercy” (Rom 9:15, bis)
- οἰκτιρμός / oiktirmos (n, 5x) - “sympathy, mercy” (Rom 12:1; 2 Cor 1:3; Phil 2:1; Col 3:12; Heb 10:28)
- οἰκτιρμών / oiktirmōn (adj, 3x) - “merciful” (Luke 6:36, bis; James 5:11)
- ἰλάσκομαι / hilaskomai (v, 2x) – “to show kindness; appease, propitiate, conciliate” (Luke 18:13; Heb 2:17)
- ἰλεως / hileōs (adj, 2x) – “gracious, merciful” (Matt 16:22, “God forbid” idiom; Heb 8:12)
- συμπαθέω / sympatheō (v, 2x) – “to sympathize, feel sympathy for” (Heb 4:15; 10:34)
- συμπαθής / sympathēs (adj, 1x) – “sympathetic” (1 Pet 3:8)

Gospel Texts about Mercy/Compassion/Pity (NRSV):

Restoring a Leper (Mark 1:40-45)

- Mark 1:41 – Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, “I do choose. Be made clean!”

Gerasene Demoniac (Mark 5:1-20)

- Mark 5:19 – But Jesus refused, and said to him, “Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy he has shown you.”

Feeding of the 5000 (Mark 6:30-44; Matt 14:13-21)

- Mark 6:34 – As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.
- Matt 14:14 – When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick.

Feeding of the 4000 (Mark 8:1-10; Matt 15:32-39)

- Mark 8:2 – “I have compassion for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat.”
- Matt 15:32 – Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I have compassion for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat; and I do not want to send them away hungry, for they might faint on the way.”

Epileptic Demoniac (Mark 9:14-29; Matt 17:14-21)

- Mark 9:22 – “It has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you are able to do anything, have pity on us and help us.”
- Matt 17:15 – “Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly; he often falls into the fire and often into the water.”

Blind Man (Bartimaeus) at Jericho (Mark 10:46-52; par. Matt 9:27-31; Matt 20:29-34; Luke 18:35-43)

- Mark 10:47-48 – When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” / Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”
- Matt 9:27 – As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, crying loudly, “Have mercy on us, Son of David!”
- Matt 20:30-31, 34 – There were two blind men sitting by the roadside. When they heard that Jesus was passing by, they shouted, “Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!” / The crowd sternly ordered them to be quiet; but they shouted even more loudly, “Have mercy on us, Lord, Son of David!” /.../ Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes. Immediately they regained their sight and followed him.
- Luke 18:38-39 – Then he shouted, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” / Those who were in front sternly ordered him to be quiet; but he shouted even more loudly, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Sermon on the Mount: Beatitudes (Matt 5:1-12)

- Matt 5:7 – “Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.”

Instructions about Almsgiving (Matt 6; Luke 11 & 12) – note: “alms” in Greek are literally “mercies” or “acts of mercy” or “signs of sympathy”

- Matt 6:2-4 – “When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win the praise of others. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. / But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, / so that your almsgiving may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.”
- Luke 11:41 – “But as to what is within, give alms, and behold, everything will be clean for you.”
- Luke 12:33 – “Sell your belongings and give alms. Provide money bags for yourselves that do not wear out, an inexhaustible treasure in heaven that no thief can reach nor moth destroy.”

Eating with tax collectors & sinners (Matt 9:9-13); Plucking grain on a Sabbath (Matt 12:1-8); cf. Hosea 6:6

- Matt 9:13 – “Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.”
- Matt 12:7 – “But if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless.”

Harvest is Plenty, Laborers are Few (Matt 9:35-38)

- Matt 9:36 – When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Canaanite woman’s daughter (Matt 15:21-28)

- Matt 15:22 – Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon.”

PARABLE of the Unforgiving/Unmerciful Servant (Matt 18:23-35)

- Matt 18:27 – And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt.
- Matt 18:33 – “Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?”

Woes to Scribes and Pharisees (Matt 23:1-36)

- Matt 23:23 – “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint, dill, and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. It is these you ought to have practiced without neglecting the others.”

PARABLE of the Last Judgment (Sheep & Goats; Matt 25:31-46)

- Matt 25:40 – “Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.” (cf. Corporal Works of Mercy)

Mary’s Song of Parise: The Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55)

- Luke 1:50 – “His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.”
- Luke 1:54 – “He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,”

Birth of John the Baptist & Zechariah’s Song of Praise: The Benedictus (Luke 1:57-80)

- Luke 1:58 – Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.
- Luke 1:72 – “Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and has remembered his holy covenant,”
- Luke 1:78 – “By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us,”

Jesus’ Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:17-49)

- Luke 6:36-37 – “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. / Do not judge, and you will not be judged...”
- Cf. James 5:11b – “...you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.”

Raising a Widow’s Son at Nain (Luke 7:11-17)

- Luke 7:13 – When the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, “Do not weep.”

Cleansing of Ten Lepers (Luke 17:11-19)

- Luke 17:13 – they called out, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!”

PARABLES in LUKE: Good Samaritan (10:29-37); Prodigal Son (15:11-32); Rich Man & Lazarus (16:19-31); Pharisee & Publican (18:9-14)

- Luke 10:33 – But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity (compassion).
- Luke 10:37 – He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”
- Luke 15:20 – So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.
- Luke 16:24 – He called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames.’
- Luke 18:13 – But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’

Some other NT Texts:

- Rom 9:15 – For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.”
- Eph 4:32 – and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.
- Heb 8:12 – For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.
- Jas 2:13 – For judgment will be without mercy to anyone who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.
- 1Pet 2:10 – Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.
- 1Pet 3:8 – Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind.