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Compassion

“But You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth.” Psalm 86:15

The attention of many has been riveted on Japan in the past few weeks. We are grieved over the terrible tragedy that has overwhelmed that nation. However, there are some things that we should find encouraging even in the face of such devastating loss.

I went to my dermatologist yesterday and while waiting I picked up a copy of *Time* for March 28, 2011. There was a quote from Emperor Akihito:

I hope from the bottom of my heart that the people will, hand in hand, treat each other with compassion and overcome these difficult times.

In another article about the situation in Japan, the author wrote:

In a society seen as the most stoic on earth, the closest thing to chaos was a man cutting in line.

There is an image that sticks in my mind from a news broadcast one night not long after the tsunami had rocked Japan. An elderly couple was back at their home trying to clean up the mess. What struck me most was their attitude of trying to take care of the situation themselves. They were not standing in the rubble waiting for someone to come rescue them. They were taking positive action to try to remedy the situation. They were hard at work trying to get back on their feet. This is one of the things that I find encouraging. This elderly couple was even trying to share what little they could salvage with their neighbors. This is a lesson more people need to learn.

Another encouraging sign to me is the compassion that I have witnessed in my own congregation. People are asking what they can do and they are willing to send donations to help alleviate the suffering of these people half way around the world that they do not even know personally. I believe there is a realization that it could be me that was hit by this tragedy. So we reach out to our fellowman in compassion.

In speaking of the high priest's office, the Hebrew writer said, “He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness” (Heb. 5:2). Of course, Jesus is our High Priest and we know that he came and suffered in the flesh so that he could understand our struggles and so that he could sympathize with our weaknesses. We can encourage one another even in life's most difficult times because we know we have a High Priest who understands and cares.

“But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.” Matthew 9:36