

Pentecost 06 –July 17, 2022

“Try a Little Kindness”

Read: Galatians 5: 15 - 26/ Memorize: Galatians 5: 22 - 23

In 1865, General Robert E. Lee, after surrendering at Appomattox, was named president of Washington University in Lexington, VA. While he was president of the university, a new student came into his office and asked for a copy of the school’s rules and regulations.

Lee looked at him and said, “Son, we don’t have any rules and regulations in print.” The young man said, “You mean this school has no rules?” Lee replied, “We have only one.” The student asked, “What is it?” Lee replied, “Our only rule is kindness.”

Perhaps we would be well advised to institute a similar rule because kindness has become an increasingly rare commodity. We are more likely to be insulted than treated with kindness. If you want to check that out, post something controversial on your social media site and watch the reaction. A word of warning, only do this if you want to subject yourself to an incredible amount of abuse. This is not an entirely new problem.

The Kindness Society was formed over twenty years ago. They had one purpose: “We are striving to spread kindness by following a simple rule: do not think, speak or act unkindly towards others.” More recently Random Acts of kindness became popular. These groups are to be commended for their attempts at kindness, but they also recognize that it is an uphill battle.

The word kindness literally means that which is “good, helpful and suitable.” It often means to be gracious to others. If we go back to Ephesians 4: 32 we hear, “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another just as God in Christ also forgave you.”

One of the great acts of kindness in the Bible takes place between Jesus and some children. People were bringing their children to Jesus to touch. The disciples wanted to shoo them away.

He shows His kindness by welcoming those children and reminding us, “For of such is the Kingdom of God.”

Jesus was actually following the example of His Father. Psalm 117: 1 - 2 says, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples! For His merciful kindness is great towards us." It was out of God's kindness that He sent His Son to die for us so that He could give us eternal life through faith.

As Luke talks about Jesus' kindness, he reminds us how kindly Jesus even treats babies. I think it's important for us to hear that, because He wants us to handle people's feelings the way Jesus handles babies, with kindness, gentleness and tenderness.

On the other hand, we don't want to mistake kindness for weakness.

One great lesson of leadership that I have learned is that tenderness can lead people to do things that toughness never can. There is an Aesop's fable in which the wind and the sun are arguing over who is the stronger. The wind laid down a challenge to the sun: "Do you see that old man down there? I can make him take his coat off quicker than you can." The sun agreed to go behind a cloud while the wind blew up a storm. The harder the wind blew, the firmer the old man wrapped his coat around himself. Eventually, the wind gave up.

When this big bluster finally gave up, the sun came out. He began to smile kindly upon the old man. Before long, the old man mopped his brow, pulled off his coat and strolled on his way. The sun knew the secret: kindness and a gentle touch are stronger than force and fury. I believe that one of the greatest marks of leadership is kindness.

Kindness is not only to be shown, it is also to be shared, especially by our lips. The Epistle of James warns us that the tongue can be a dastardly thing. However, we have a choice of how we use it. When Jesus greeted those children, He blessed them, giving them a word of kindness and encouragement. We can all chose to carry a kindness kit with us wherever we go. You never want to underestimate the power of a kind word. Does it seem amazing to you that Jesus tells us that we should be kind to our enemies? We can understand kindness to our friends, after all they are kind to us. Why should we be kind to our enemy? Jesus says that they are God's children also. We may not see eye to eye with them, or like them, but that does not give us license to treat them poorly. We treat people with kindness because of God's kindness to us.

However, we want to remember that kindness is not softness. It is a not a sentimental indulgence that tolerates wrong and evil in other people. Nor does it

sanction misleading people, which is what people sometimes see as a kindness when they withhold bad news.

Sometimes, kindness means not just confronting the sin of others, but condemning that sin. We should not take delight in having to do that, but see that it is done with kindness. We'll hear these words next week from Galatians 6: 1: "Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself." So we use kindness as a way to offer correction while at the same time being strong in our presentation.

Think about how often Jesus showed His love and kindness by a mere touch. We know that that is one of the most powerful ways to show kindness. A gentle touch can help a friend to calm down or decrease blood pressure. Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 13: 4 that "love is kind." Sometimes, love is heard in a kind word or a kind note. Sometimes, love is felt by a kind touch.

Before random acts of kindness were being promoted as a way of helping our society, Jesus had already thought about them. Someone once described the mission of Jesus in this way:

"God is looking for people who are willing to participate in acts of love and kindness to those outside of their present circle. He's looking for people who believe that a humble demonstration of love plants a seed of eternity in the hearts of others that will blossom into faith in Christ."

Perhaps there is no greater illustration of that than what Jesus does in Matthew 8. A leper had come to Jesus, worshiped Him and then asked this, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." All this man was looking for was a word but in verse 3 we're told that Jesus went beyond a word: "Then Jesus put His hand out and touched him."

Everybody knew that you don't touch a leper. Not even a person's own family would dare to touch them. This was the first instance mentioned in the Bible that anyone touches a leper, but that's exactly what Jesus does. It was, without question, a touch of kindness to a man who had probably endured years of isolation and loss of touch.

It's unlikely that any of us will experience that kind of isolation because of leprosy, but there is another illness that is just as dangerous to us as leprosy was and it has a similar impact. It's a chronic condition with a terminal impact.

It separates us from one another, leads us to do terrible things to each other and isolates us out of guilt and shame. Its sin and we see its effects all around us every day. What's even worst is we like to think that we can find our own cure. That only leads to more failure and death.

Out of God's great kindness and love He interceded for us. He brought forgiveness for all who will believe in Him through Jesus. Out of that kindness and love we can look at people from a much different perspective in Jesus. As we meet fellow saints and sinners, we can share that same kindness and love that we ourselves have experienced in Jesus. We call it "Sharing Christ, Changing Lives!" That's God plan to change the world!

Here's your question: To whom will you show the kindness of God?