

7 Like Giving Virtues Kindness
Micah 6:6-8, Ephesians 4:30-5:2
WRCoB 08.07.22

Did you know that there's a day
Called the *World Kindness Day*?

It is observed on the 13th of November
And has been celebrated annually since 1998.

And to think I didn't even know
I would have made it a point to be kind that day!!

The day was introduced
By an international coalition of NGOs
A part of the greater World Kindness Movement.

Its purpose is *to help everyone understand that compassion
for others is what binds us all together.*

They're right of course.

And we who follow Christ should be paving the way.

For kindness is a tenet of the Judeo-Christian faith
To do justice
To love kindness
And to walk humbly with God.

Unfortunately, we're known for lots of things
Other than kindness, love, and good will.

Many Americans negatively view Christians in America
In these days of division and controversy.

We are considered, narrow-minded, bigoted, and intolerant.

In some ways we are no longer a religious movement
But a political one. And that's just plain wrong!!

We should stand for high morals and social justice
Not from a political position
But from a Christian position.

As Christians we are to present ourselves before the world
In love and kindness to friend and foe alike.

If we are not known by our love and kindness
Than we are clearly not following Jesus.

We arrive at the 6th of the 7th life-giving virtues
The virtue of kindness.

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According to a Catholic website:

*Kindness, or love of neighbor
Is the virtue that counters the sin of envy.*

*Envy, in contradiction to God's law of love
Is manifest in a person's sorrow or distress
Over the good fortune of another person.*

*Conversely, kindness is manifest
In the unprejudiced, compassionate
And charitable concern for others.*

Envy resents someone else's good fortune
Kindness seeks it and rejoices when they have it.

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In today's second Scripture Reading
Paul speaks about the new life in Christ.

Paul tells us to put away the things of our old life.

By doing this we won't grieve the Spirit
Which was given us
When we became children of God.

He says let all bitterness and wrath and anger
And clamor and slander be put away
Along with all malice.

Note the use of the word "ALL" twice in one sentence
Put away all of it . . . let none remain!

And then he says **Be kind to one another (v. 32).**

The Greek word for kindness is *chrestos*.

It is the same word Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 13:4
When Paul writes

Love is patient, love is kind (chrestos)
Love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude

Henry James the American novelist
Once said to his nephew:

There are three things that are important in human life —

- 1. The first, is to be kind;*
- 2. The second, is to be kind;*
- 3. The third, is to be kind.*

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How, then, can we be kinder to one another?

There are some insights in our passage today.

Paul says to be kind to one another.
But he knows that its easier said than done.

Paul know that true kindness comes from the heart.

Paul adds a word directly following be kind.
Tenderhearted.

I like this word **tender-hearted (v. 32)**.

It's very descriptive.

It means having a kind and gentle nature
Easily moved to love, to pity, or to compassion.

Jesus was tender-hearted.
We are to be tender-hearted.

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Acts of kindness
If not motivated out of a tenderhearted spirit
Probably won't last long.

It's hard to act kind when you don't feel kind.

Kindness and tenderheartedness
Is spurred on by something else
Something bigger, something stronger,
Something outside of self.

It is found in the next phrase:

**Forgiving one another,
As God in Christ forgave you (v. 32).**

The kindness we show to others
Comes from a heart
Transformed by the love of God.

It comes from a heart immersed in love
From God, for God, and for neighbor.

It is the character and quality of the new life in Christ

It is bathed and baptized in the Spirit.

Paul says be kind and tenderhearted.

And since we are motivated

By God's tender-hearted loving kindness

We become more and more like Christ.

Paul says:

Ephesians 5:1-2 NRSVUE ¹ Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, ² and walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us

Our actions will mimic God's actions in Christ.

Our response to others mimic God's response to us.

Paul makes it very clear that as we accept Christ's love

We begin to live lives impersonating the life of Christ.

The motivation for our actions

Comes from a deep sense of gratitude

For God's grace found in Christ Jesus.

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The OT reading for today Micah 6:6-8

Affirms our proper response to God's love:

In a day and age before Christ

When atonement for sin

Was in the Jewish sacrificial system,

Micah asks the question

6:6 With what shall I come before the Lord?

Shall we bring burnt offerings? Calves a year old?

Thousands of rams? 10 thousand gallons of oil?

Shall we give up our firstborns?
The fruit of our bodies
For the sin of our souls?

What's it going to take to atone for our sins?

No, God says, none of those things.

Jesus is our atonement.

The letter to Titus says it as well as anyone:

Titus 3:4-5 NRSVUE ⁴ **But when the goodness and loving kindness (chrestos) of God our Savior appeared,** ⁵ **he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.**

What God requires then of us is simply this.

- **To do justice**
- **To love kindness**
- **To walk humbly with God.**

Powerful words of truth.

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Kindness is a fruit of the Spirit:

Gal. 5:22 Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness (chrestos), goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Now, to be sure, acts of kindness works both ways.

It obviously benefits the one receiving kindness.

The one waylaid by bandits
On the road from Jericho to Jerusalem
Received the benefits of charity and kindness
From the Good Samaritan.

The ones who were hungry and given food
Or thirsty and given drink

The stranger who was welcomed,
The naked who was clothed
The sick, and imprisoned who were visited

All received the benefits of kindness.

But as in all of spiritual virtues
Kindness to others has a reciprocal effect.

Dr. David R. Hamilton

In a book entitled *Kindness is Good for You*
Lists 5 beneficial side-effects of kindness.

- 1. Kindness makes us happier.** The act of giving produces elevated levels of dopamine in the brain causing a good feeling, sometimes referred to as a *helper's high*. The act of giving simply feels good. We know this in Christmas gift exchanges. It feels good to give and receive gifts.
- 2. Kindness gives us healthier hearts.** In studies, kindness produces emotional warmth and emotional warmth produces oxytocin. Oxytocin produces nitric oxide which helps to expand blood vessels and lessens blood pressure.
- 3. Kindness slows aging.** Research has shown there is a link between compassion and the vagus nerve. The vagus nerve helps to control heart rate and affects the body's inflammatory reflex.

4. **Kindness makes for better relationships.** Kindness builds bridges and draws people closer. When you're kind to someone they are just much more apt to be kind to you!
5. **Kindness is contagious.** When we're kind to others it prompts others to also be kind not just back at us but on towards others. Hence the "paying forward" movement. Paying forward is the act of kindness to someone and that someone shows kindness to the next and on and on and on.

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I believe a small act of kindness has universal impact.

Kenneth Chang wrote a eulogy in the NYTimes
On Edward N. Lorenz, the father of chaos theory

It was Lorenz who discovered that
Seemingly tiny and insignificant changes in data
Can have huge differences in the final result.

His theory was called "The Butterfly Effect"
Based on a paper he presented

*Predictability: Does the Flap of a Butterfly's Wings in Brazil
Set off a Tornado in Texas?*

He hypothesized that
Even one tiny event can cause world-wide changes
Affecting millions of people.

In spiritual matters
Jesus tells us there is also a "butterfly effect".

Jesus teaches that even one kind act has universal impact.

For just as you did it to the least of these my people
Jesus says, you have done unto me.

One kind word or action can change the world we live in!

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In a world filled with bullies and bigots

The world could use a little tender-hearted loving kindness.

There is just too much hate, and anger
And hostility in the world

Followers of Jesus are called to be the salt of the earth
Light of the world
Hope for the hopeless

We are called to follow the beat of a different drum.

Let the world know we are Christian by our love.

Be kind.

Let us be forgiving in nature
As Christ forgave us.

Let us be imitators of Christ
As beloved children of God

Let us show the world a different way of living.

Yes, World Kindness Day?

Come on!

In a world where you can be anything?

Be kind.

365 days a year.