

Kindness  
Galatians 5:22-25  
Micah 6:6-8

Westminster Presbyterian Church  
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Galatians 5:22-25

By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.

Micah 6:6-8

“With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high?  
Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves a year old?  
Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with tens of thousands of rivers of oil?  
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”

“He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you  
but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

This summer we’re talking about the fruit of the Spirit, the things we should look for, to see where the Holy Spirit is at work in the world. They are the things we should strive for in our own lives, in order to be working with the Holy Spirit.

Last week we spoke about patience, and how we can be patient, because we know that God always keeps God’s amazing promises, in God’s own time.

This week the topic is kindness.

I looked the word “kind” up in a dictionary, and found it defined as “having or showing a friendly, generous, and considerate nature.”

Friendly, generous, and considerate.

I looked up the original Greek word that Paul wrote, and kindness is a good translation. Goodness, kindness, generosity. But it loses something in translation when you miss that it

comes from the same root word in Greek as the word Christ. The word is part of who Jesus Christ is, and, if we are Christians, or, literally, “little Christs,” it is part of who we are.

In one of his books, Kurt Vonnegut wrote a blessing for newborn babies. It says, “Hello, babies. Welcome to Earth. It’s hot in the summer and cold in the winter. It’s round and wet and crowded. At the outside, babies, you’ve got about a hundred years here. There’s only one rule that I know of, babies—... you’ve got to be kind.”<sup>1</sup>

When I think of the word, “kindness,” I think of Fred Rogers, a Presbyterian clergyman whose ministry probably made more a difference in the world than most. Mister Rogers was kind, and considerate, and gentle. He didn’t beat people over the head and tell people that they had to be kind. He modeled that behavior for children and adults alike. He showed them what it was like.

Kindness changes the world. A kind word or action may only change the world of one person, but more likely it will change the lives of the people that person touches, and the people whom they touch. You’ll never know how far your kindness may go.

Today, some people see even the concept of kindness as “political.” The people who claim that Ayn Rand was right, that selfishness is a virtue and altruism morally wrong. These people have nothing kind to say about Mister Rogers, or the ideal of being kind to your fellow human beings. They find excuses not to help people, not because they don’t like specific other

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<sup>1</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*. The taking of the Lord’s name in vain I edited out for sermon purposes.

people, but just because they're opposed to helping people who quote-unquote, "didn't earn everything they got."

Reality check time. None of us earned everything we got. None of us earned God's kindness to us. None of us earned Jesus being born and living and dying and being resurrected for us. None of us is even capable of earning it. That's what makes it kindness. That's what makes it grace.

Jesus told a parable once about a man who was forgiven a huge debt, on the nature of four billion dollars. The man then went and found someone who owed him a hundred dollars, and wanted him thrown in prison for the debt. The man was called out, and his original debt was re-instated.<sup>2</sup>

Remember, Jesus said that, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."<sup>3</sup>

People who don't want to extend grace and kindness in the world are wrong. They are choosing to be opposed to the work of God in the world.

It is true that we should seek to be wise in how we are kind to others. Sometimes the way in which we help someone needs to be carefully chosen, to do the most good and avoid doing harm. But that's no excuse to do nothing.

So what do we do? We read Scripture, and it say that we're supposed to be kind, but what if that doesn't feel like it comes naturally?

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew 18:21-35.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 5:7

Some of the fruit of the spirit are things that, at first glance, look like things that you can't choose – they happen because of what's happening around us. Joy, or Peace, for example. I hope that, after hearing sermons on those fruits, you understand that they are things we can choose, no matter what's happening.

Kindness is even more so.

Many psychological studies have been done on the subject of kindness, and the surprising thing that the scientists found was that we tend to misunderstand cause and effect here. We don't feel kindly toward someone, and then we do something kind. No, we do something kind, and then our minds find reasons to be kind to them, as if our minds are trying to justify the thing that we did. It really doesn't matter why we originally did the kind thing – our minds will find a good reason.

We discover that the new person in school or at work or in the neighborhood is a really nice person, after we welcome them. We notice reasons why someone deserves help, after we've made the decision to help them.

So kindness is something we can choose. We can choose to be kind, even if we're doing it because we feel like we should, not because we're really feeling it. We can choose to be kind, and we will find ourselves working ourselves into being kind people.

So this next week, every time you interact with someone, whether it's a family member, or the cashier at the grocery store, or the driver in front of you on the way to the store, remember, you can choose to be kind. You can choose to make the world a better place by how you treat them.

Choose love.

Choose grace.

Choose kindness.

Especially if they don't deserve it.

Every time you do, you change the world.

Amen.