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2 Peter 1:3-11
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Kindness

Last week, we talked about the fruit of patience and how the Hebrew word qavah can imply a patient hopeful, waiting. If your week has been anything like mine, then God definitely has given you opportunity to have your patience tested. The more it gets tested, the tougher it becomes. Or should I say, the thicker skin we develop.

Author Christopher Wright in *Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit* says, “If patience is a tough fruit of the Spirit, then kindness is a tender one.”¹ And so it is kindness that we direct our attentions to today.

Kindness is like patience in action. This is what we do when we are needing to be patient with someone. An action that requires a choice. We can either act such that this fruit of the Holy Spirit is displayed in and through our lives, or we can act in keeping with the works of our flesh.

Kindness is a gift we extend to one another, especially those who may not deserve our kindness. And it is something that I wish we saw more of in this political season.

Our scripture today comes from 2 Peter 1:3-11. The Apostle Peter was warning Christians about false teaching as he approached the end of his life. Apparently spreading fake news is nothing new in the public realm. So let’s listen now for the Word of the Lord.

3 His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. **4** Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; **6** and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; **7** and to godliness, brotherly and sisterly kindness; and to brotherly and sisterly kindness, love. **8** For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9** But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.

¹ Christopher J. Wright, *Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit, Growing in Christlikeness* (Downers Grove, IL: IVPress, 2017), 82.

10 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, **11** and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Let us pray. Prayer of Illumination.

This morning what I'd like to do is to weave together a patchwork of kindness looking at a few examples of kindness of God and Jesus in the Old and New Testaments. Then we will consider how we can exercise this fruit so that we produce more of it. And then we will ask what God is saying to us today.

The Hebrew word for kindness is "hesed." It appears over 250 times in the Old Testament, 50% of which are found in the Psalms, and has been translated 169 different ways over six translations. It can mean "mercy, kindness, lovingkindness, goodness, loyalty, or faithfulness" It is often used to describe how God deals with his people, kindly.

Psalm 23, "Surely goodness and lovingkindness (hesed) will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."²

Proverbs 11, "A kindhearted woman gains respect, but a ruthless man gains only wealth."³

The Prophet Isaiah said, "I will tell of the kindnesses (hesed) of the Lord, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the Lord has done for us - yes, the many good things he has done for Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses (hesed)."⁴

The Prophet Jeremiah spoke of God's hesed, "Let not the wise person boast of their wisdom, or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, but let them who boast boast about this: that they understand and know me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness (hesed), justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight."⁵

The Prophet Micah said, "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 (hesed), and to walk humbly with your God?"⁶

So kindness is an aspect of God's character. A blessing that we receive in this life and that follows us into the next. Kindness is connected to God's compassion,

² Psalm 23:6

³ Proverbs 11:16

⁴ Isaiah 63:7

⁵ Jeremiah 9:24

⁶ Micah 6:8

justice, righteousness and forgiveness. God does not deal with us we deserve, but shows us mercy (hesed).

Not only do we hear of God's kindness to his people, but we see them demonstrate it towards others.

In Genesis, as Abraham was looking for a wife for his son Isaac, the key quality that he sought was kindness. So when he stopped by a spring to water his camel, the first young woman who showed kindness to Abraham by giving water to his camel was Rebekah. And Rebekah became Isaac's wife.⁷ Folks if you're looking for a good spouse, find someone who is kind.

In Ruth, Boaz shows kindness to widows Ruth and Naomi by letting them glean from the edges of his fields so that they would not starve. And then later, Boaz married Ruth so that Naomi could be taken care of in her old age.⁸

In 2 Samuel after the death of Saul and his son Jonathan, David wished to show kindness to Jonathan's offspring and so took his disabled son, Mephibosheth, and raised him as his own. This was despite the fact that Saul was David's enemy and sought to kill him.⁹

Each of these people showed kindness or were shown kindness. Why? Because the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob showed kindness to them first. This was their worshipful response in return.

Folks, when we grasp the depth of God's kindness to us, then this should be a natural response. That's why I just don't get why so many Christians today are turning blind eyes away from their political candidates who don't reflect God's kindness to others.

In the New Testament, we see countless examples of Jesus' kindness as he encountered people on his way. Jesus was never in a hurry, never bothered by the interruptions that they caused him, whether it was the diseased, the blind, the lame, the sinful, or children. We never get this sense that Jesus was ever put out by anyone except those who hypocritically claimed to be followers of God, while their hearts, words, and actions showed otherwise.

The Greek word for kindness is *chrestos*. It "means goodness in action, sweetness in disposition, gentleness in dealing with others, benevolence, kindness, affability. The word describes the ability to act for the welfare of those taxing your patience. The Holy Spirit removes abrasive qualities from the character of one under His control."¹⁰

⁷ Genesis 24:12

⁸ Ruth 2:13

⁹ 2 Samuel 9

¹⁰ Thomas E. Trask and Wayde I. Goodall, *The Fruit of the Spirit, Becoming the Person God Wants You to Be* (Nashville: Emanate Books, 2000), 81.

Chrestos is the word that Jesus used to describe his burden which we often translate as “light.” But what if we replaced it with kind instead. Jesus said, “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is kind.” Reads complete differently doesn't it?

When Jesus was teaching on how we should treat our enemies, he said, “Do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great and you will be sons and daughters of the Most High, because [God our Heavenly Father] is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.”¹¹

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus told the parable of the Prodigal Son. Here a young man demanded his father's inheritance early and went off spent it on wild irresponsible living. When he was completely broke, he limped home to ask his father for a job as servant. But his father showed him kindness, compassion, and mercy. The old man ran out to meet his son on the road, hugged him, kissed him, and welcomed him back...no questions asked. That is kindness. Chrestos.

Authors Trask and Goodall write, “As Christians we are to be full of compassion, an emotion that will move us to the very depths of our being. Simply put, a kind person cares about people.”¹²

But that kindness cost the father in the parable something. It cost him half of his estate, but more importantly, it cost him his dignity, his pride, his reputation, his need for justice, and his righteous indignation.

And so the same thing goes for us. When we live into Jesus' kindness, we let go of all of these things. We know that because God has been kind to us in our moments of rebellion, then we should show kindness to others in their own.

In the Pauline Epistles, we see how Paul exhorts Jesus' followers to be kind.

To the Corinthians, Paul said, “Love is patient, love is kind.”¹³ Paul painted love with the strokes of patience and kindness together.

To the Philippians amidst of a brutal church dispute about something...and by the way church disputes are usually fueled by pride, Paul said, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.”¹⁴

¹¹ Luke 6:35-26

¹² Trask and Goodall, *The Fruit of the Spirit*, 83.

¹³ 1 Corinthians 13:4

¹⁴ Philippians 2:3

In Lystra Paul talked to unbelievers about God saying, “He has shown kindness by giving you rain and crops in their seasons, he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy.”¹⁵

And to the Roman Christians he was even more direct, “You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.

Now we know that God’s judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So when you, a mere mortal, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God’s judgment? Or do you show contempt for the riches of God’s kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness leads you to repentance.”¹⁶

Like that prodigal son, his father’s kindness led him back home. And so in the same way, it’s God’s kindness, not dealing with us as we deserve, that brings us back home.

My friends are we feeling far from home this morning? Let us listen to the Father saying, “Come on home child! It’s never too late.”

So that begs to ask, to whom can we show kindness today?

Who has shown kindness to us?

Remember, we don’t just become kinder simply because we decide we want to. We become kinder by yielding to the inner working of Jesus’ Holy Spirit who grows this fruit in us as we stay connected to Jesus Christ. Sometimes it requires a choice. As I mentioned earlier, we either yield to the Holy Spirit, or we give into the flesh. The former leads to life. The later leads to death. But I guarantee this, we will never regret our acts of kindness.

Two questions we can ask ourselves are: “What would I do for people I were Christ? What would I do for people if they were Christ?”¹⁷

Good questions to stop and ponder when our patience is being tried.

If Jesus displayed kindness all the way to the cross, then we too should be kind when people who say bad things about us, misinterpret our words or intentions, or even take advantage of us. That’s the Christian way.

“Anita Roddick, author of *A Revolution in Kindness* says, ‘The end result of kindness is that it draws people to you... but a far better reason is “The end result of kindness is that it draws people to Christ.”’¹⁸

¹⁵ Acts 14:17

¹⁶ Romans 4:1-4

¹⁷ Wright, *The Fruit of the Holy Spirit*, 95.

¹⁸ IBID, 96.

Let's close this morning by brainstorming together what we can do to spread random acts of kindness in our world. How about...

Paying a young couple's dinner sitting next to you at the restaurant.

Playing peek-a-boo with that fussy child sitting in front of you on the airplane and encouraging the parents that you've been in their shoes before.

Writing an encouraging note to someone who is down in the dumps.

Dropping off a little anonymous gift on a neighbor's doorstep.

Doing your sibling's chores at home.

Giving a friendly smile and greeting to strangers on the street.

What else is God putting on our hearts to do today? I'm sure the Holy Spirit is saying something. The more we cultivate this fruit of kindness in our lives, the kinder we become.

But don't wait. Tomorrow might be too late.

Amen.