

“Kindness”

Ephesians 4:25-32

June 1, 2025

The Biblical text for today is from Paul’s letter to the Christian church in Ephesus. Paul is writing the letter from confinement to let the Ephesian Christians know how he is doing and, as always, he is writing to them to speak words of wisdom about the Christian life which they have entered through their baptisms.

In today’s text, Paul is telling the Ephesians to put away their old sinful selves and live rightly through the Holy Spirit. In particular, the Ephesian Christians are to exhibit the fruit of the Spirit which is **kindness**.

Some people understand kindness as being “nice” to others. This is, however, to diminish the meaning of kindness. One Biblical dictionary¹ describes what “kindness” really means. The entry says:

God's kindness is presupposed or taught throughout Scripture....God's kindness is manifest in the full salvation that comes through Christ. Indeed, our salvation derives from the kindness of God , and it is through continuing in his kindness that we are saved.

The Scriptures also teach that divine kindness is to be reflected in the human experience. Indeed, expressing kindness to other human beings is more important than performing ritual sacrifice to God. Thus, we are to love kindness and to be children of the Most High, exhibiting his kindness and mercy...

¹¹ Bakers Evangelical Dictionary, “Kindness.”

*Yet human imitation of God's kindness does not come naturally. In fact, ultimately no one is kind. It is only **as the fruit of God's Spirit** that kindness can be a consistent part of the believer's experience.*

One preacher adds to this, writing:

More than once in the New Testament, the very salvation we receive through Christ Jesus is said to have sprung from God's kindness. But how can God's ultimate triumph over sin, evil, death, and the devil stem from God's just being kind? If someone gives you a tissue because they noticed you are getting emotional while watching a movie, you say, "Thanks, that was kind of you." But if someone donates a kidney to you, saying, "Thanks, that was kind of you" seems too limp a way to sum up so costly an act. So how can salvation stem from kindness? It can because what we forget is that at the biblical core of kindness there is a moral power, an uprightness of character and a generosity of vision that can finally be transformative. In a sermon, Tom Long once suggested that kindness is what allows us to see every person as an image-bearer of God, a creature of such weight and worth that if we could see now what this person will become in the kingdom of God, we'd be tempted to fall down and worship so luminous a being. God sees us this way too. While we were yet sinners and so deserving of only punishment, the kindness of God allowed God to see each one of us as a frightened, damaged child who still bore, deep down, the divine imprint placed there in the beginning. In a kindness that is as fierce as it is tender, God stooped to us in our weakness and lifted our faces so that our eyes could meet his eyes. And in that kindness-inspired moment, we were saved by grace. And by kindness too.

"Henry James once told a nephew, 'There are three things that are important in human life. The first is to be kind, the second is to be kind, the third is to be kind.'

Be kind because although kindness is not by a long shot the same thing as holiness, kindness is one of the doors that holiness enters the world through, enters us through — not just gently kind but sometimes fiercely kind."

Another writerⁱ gives an illustration of kindness. For me, it is kind of the modern day telling of the story of the Good Samaritan. Here's the story:

During this past year I've had three instances of car trouble: a blowout on a freeway, a bunch of blown fuses and an out-of-gas situation. They all happened while I was driving other people's cars, which for some reason makes it worse on an emotional level. And on a practical level as well, what with the fact that I carry things like a jack and extra fuses in my own car and know enough not to park on a steep incline with less than a gallon of fuel. Each time, when these things happened, I was disgusted with the way people didn't bother to help. I was stuck on the side of the freeway hoping my friend's roadside service would show, just watching tow trucks cruise past me. The people at the gas stations where I asked for a gas can told me that they couldn't lend them out "for safety reasons," but that I could buy a...one-gallon can, with no cap, for \$15....

But you know who came to my rescue all three times? Immigrants. Mexican immigrants. None of them spoke any English.

One of those guys stopped to help me with the blowout even though he had his whole family of four in tow. I was on the side of the road for close to three hours with my friend's big Jeep. I put signs in the windows, big signs that said, "NEED A JACK," and offered money. Nothing. Right as I was about to give up and start hitching, a van pulled over, and the guy bounded out. He sized up the situation and called for his daughter, who spoke English. He conveyed through her that he had a jack but that it was too small for the Jeep, so we would need to brace it. Then he got a saw from the van and cut a section out of a big log on the side of the road. We

rolled it over, put his jack on top and we were in business.

I started taking the wheel off, and then, if you can believe it, I broke his tire iron. It was one of those collapsible ones, and I wasn't careful, and I snapped the head clean off.

No worries: he ran to the van and handed it to his wife, and she was gone in a flash down the road to buy a new tire iron. She was back in 15 minutes. We finished the job with a little sweat and cussing (the log started to give), and I was a very happy man. The two of us were filthy and sweaty. His wife produced a large water jug for us to wash our hands in. I tried to put a 20 in the man's hand, but he wouldn't take it, so instead I went up to the van and gave it to his wife as quietly as I could. I thanked them up one side and down the other. I asked the little girl where they lived, thinking maybe I'd send them a gift for being so awesome. She said they lived in Mexico. They were in Oregon so Mommy and Daddy could pick cherries for the next few weeks. Then they were going to pick peaches, then go back home. After I said my goodbyes and started walking back to the Jeep, the girl called out and asked if I'd had lunch. When I told her no, she ran up and handed me a tamale. This family, undoubtedly poorer than just about everyone else on that stretch of highway, working on a seasonal basis where time is money, took a couple of hours out of their day to help a strange guy on the side of the road while people in tow trucks were just passing him by. But we weren't done yet. I thanked them again and walked back to my car and opened the foil on the tamale (I was starving by this point), and what did I find inside? My \$20 bill! I whirled around and ran to the van and the guy rolled down his window. He saw the \$20 in my hand and just started shaking his head no. All I could think to say was, "Por favor, por favor, por favor," with my hands out. The guy just smiled and, with what looked like great concentration, said in English: "Today you, tomorrow me." Then he rolled up his window and drove away, with his daughter waving to me from the back. I sat in my

car eating the best tamale I've ever had, and I just started to cry. It had been a rough year; nothing seemed to break my way. This was so out of left field I just couldn't handle it. In the several months since then I've changed a couple of tires, given a few rides to gas stations and once drove 50 miles out of my way to get a girl to an airport. I won't accept money. But every time I'm able to help, I feel as if I'm putting something in the bank.

Plato wrote, years ago, "Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle." But we don't follow Plato; we follow Jesus. Tommy Bond² reminds us that Jesus paid attention to those who were ignored.

He healed those no one else would touch.

He trusted others before they'd proven themselves.

He helped unexpected people in unexpected ways.

He loved those who hated Him.

He showed mercy when others wanted violence.

In short, He was kind.

Jesus' love didn't stop with simple, passing, transactional kindness. He took that love as far as it could go by willingly allowing Himself to be killed on a cross to restore our broken relationship with God forever. He did it all for us. He did it all for you.

Let us come to the table now to be renewed in the Spirit of God, and most especially, kindness.

Amen.

² Tommy Bond, "Feeling Annoyed? Try These Three Prayers for Kindness."
