

The Fruit of the Spirit is Kindness

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How many of you have ever heard the story of Mephibosheth that the video showed us this morning?

Its not that well known – not like Noah’s ark, or Jonah in the big fish. Not too common in the Sunday School books.

But it’s a great story...a great story of kindness – the fruit of the Spirit we are looking at today.

To recap Mephibosheth was the son of Jonathan and grandson of Israel’s King Saul. Jonathan, Saul’s son and David were best friends when they were young.

They were always together. Maybe you had a best friend when you were young and you still have memories of having good times together as kids.

That was Jonathan and David. My son Jonathan growing up actually had a good friend David when he was young and we told them both this story and

The Jonathan in the Bible actually saved David’s life at one point, because Jonathan’s father, King Saul, wanted to kill David because he was jealous of him. And it was in this context that David made a promise to Jonathan – a vow - that he would always look after Jonathan’s family.

Well, Jonathan grows up and has a son – Mephibosheth.

Not exactly the most popular name today – I don’t think you can find Mephibosheth in the baby book of popular names.

Ever have a friend named Mephibosheth?

Now the story of Mephibosheth is kind of a sad one. He was only 5 years old when Jonathan, his father, and as well as his grandfather King Saul, are killed in battle with the Philistines.

Mephibosheth’s nurse was so worried that the Philistine would kill Mephibosheth as well, that she fled, and as she fled she dropped the child and he suffered permanent damage to his legs – so much so that he was lame for the rest of his life. (2 Samuel 4:4)

Now much time passes, David becomes King of Israel for many, many years. One day David remembers the promise he made to his friend Jonathan. And he wonders – is there any family member still alive who is a relative of Jonathan's whom he can honor, given the fact that he had made this vow to his friend Jonathan so long ago.

Now I just want to pause here, because think about this a minute.

David is King. He is living in luxury. He is winning battles. He is doing well. He is popular. Not only that, but Saul, Jonathan's Dad– who has now died – had caused him no end of troubles trying to kill David many times.

There are so many reasons why David could have easily talked his way out of taking the trouble to track down Jonathan's family.

The problem in finding Jonathan's lineage was that it was customary that when a ruler was defeated that his whole family would be killed as well so that there would be no lineage of that ruler left to reclaim the throne. However, we find in [2 Samuel 4](#) that Mephibosheth survives.

But David makes the effort. He finds Mephibosheth – it takes some intentionality, but they track him down.

Someone once said “**The road to hell is paved with good intentions.**”

I can want to do good.

I can say I love others.

But until I make it practical and real, talking about being loving in church doesn't cut it. I must follow through and do the kind thing, even if it is inconvenient and it takes effort

Even if it takes my precious time.

Even if it distracts me from what I may think are more important things.

Friends, even if you can talk yourself out of it, and you don't have to do it (no one is watching) ...be intentional about doing the kind thing anyway.

Paul writes, “**Love is ...kind**”. Kindness is the brass tacks of love. Love can get so abstract, we don't know what we're talking about.

Kindness on the other hand is the practical stuff of love. **Kindness is what you do...**

David follows through on kindness.

He asks around. He finds Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, who is lame who lives in a place called **Lo Debar** which literally means "**land of nothing**". Mephibosheth has nothing – he is destitute.

He comes to David, probably afraid because being summoned by the King is usually bad news. He comes to David bows down before him, and in 2 Samuel 9:7 David says to him...

"I will surely show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul and you will always eat at my table."

And in one translation Mephibosheth asks David why would you, King of Israel, "**notice a dead dog like me?**"

Bob Kuechler, a member of our church, was sharing with a group of us how he stops and talks to a woman who no one else seems to notice. She is someone who lives on the fringes – in a trailer, with no income, and a disease on her legs. People ignore her - no one wants to deal with her. But Bob stops, and notices her, and has conversations with her, and lifts her up. This is kindness. Love is kind

King David took great effort to restore Mephibosheth's fortunes and has him eat at his table – not because of anything Mephibosheth has done but because of David's kindness in remembrance of his promise to Jonathan.

What King David did, reminds me of what God has done for us.

***Hesed* is the primary Old Testament Hebrew word for "kindness."**

***Hesed* comes from the same root word in Hebrew used for a *stork*. The stork is the only bird that will adopt a stray bird not of her kind and will love and care for it as family. Much like what David did for Mephibosheth and what God does for us.**

Scripture tells us

"But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy..." (Titus 3:4-5).

If we want to see kindness we need look no further than Christ.

The word for *kind* in the New Testament is *chrestos*. The word for *Christ* is *christos*. You can't hear this in the original language without connecting *kindness* with *Christ*.

And the meaning of this word-chrestos- has to do with an act of grace.

Maybe you didn't think about Christ as kind.
Christ as loving yes – more global, abstract and out there.

But kind? Doing those concrete things that make a difference in particular ways?

Think about it. Jesus is at a wedding and they run out of wine. A huge social gaff in the first century. Jesus makes more wine – the best wine. Did he have to? No. Did he want to? Yes. Jesus is kind.

There was the woman caught in the act of adultery who was brought before Jesus. The religious leaders had grabbed her and the Mosaic law said she should be stoned. All eyes were on her when Jesus did something surprising... and kind.

He knelt down and wrote something on the ground with his finger in the dust. Some people think that just as God wrote the Mosaic law with his finger on the stone tablets (10 commandments) Jesus is writing a new law of grace with his finger in the dust. *Any of you who has no sin, you cast the first stone*, Jesus told the religious leaders. They all leave. Go and sin no more Jesus tells the woman whose life he has just saved. Jesus is kind.

You know, I find that sometimes in churches people try really hard in a lot of ways to be good people.

They do their best to be right about everything
They try to work hard...one service project after another
And they fill their schedules with more and more church activities

But in trying so hard to do the right thing, people trying to be good people, often forget to be kind to one another. We miss the forest for the trees.

I was sitting in a meeting this past week at another church. I serve on Council for the Blue Water Presbytery that we are a part of, so I sometimes go to other churches to listen and help— especially if the church is having some trouble.

Folks, these were good people sitting around that table trying to make some hard decisions, but you could have cut the animosity in that room with a knife. Outright insults, interrupting each other, disrespect and denigration. I heard it all. And afterward the Pastor had to talk to me because he felt so bludgeoned and

ripped apart. And then I got a call from someone else in that room who felt similarly.

There is nothing wrong with trying to do the right thing in church. But we are told in scripture to do the right things kindly. Be kind to one another.

Love is kind.

Mark Twain once said, “**Kindness is a language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see.**”

Frederick Buechner topped that. He simply said: “**If you want to be holy be kind.**”

Can you be kind today? We can begin right at home.

What about your spouse? Why not make a cup of coffee or give a back rub without being asked. Be kind.

Is there something you can do for that brother or sister- someone that irritates you at times?

Is there someone at your school that may need some kindness? Maybe someone that everyone else is being unkind to?

Or what about that boss or fellow employee who may be stressed to the max, irritable, or grumpy? Hasn't Jesus been kind to you even when you were less than loveable? You can be kind.

The possibilities are endless.

The mother of four in line at Target behind you.

Could you be kind to her?

Why not let her go ahead of you?

You may spend a few more minutes than you wanted but the promise of getting to the car a few minutes faster might just make her day.

And who knows? Your kindness might help her be kinder to her family when she gets home.

Folks, what if we started a kindness chain reaction! Just imagine this with me a minute...

Lets just say someone was kind to you...did you a favor—something big, something you couldn't do on your own—and that caused you to be kinder to three people the next day because you were feeling so great about that favor,

and the next day those three people were kind to three more, and the day after that those 27 each were kind to another three, and each day everyone, in turn, kept going that way, that means in two weeks that comes to **4,782,969 people touched with kindness!**

What if that started to happen? What if being kind went viral? You can start it... you really can

This past week I went to visit Carroll McCune. Carroll used to stand at the door and welcome everyone with a warm handshake that made you feel that you had come home every time you came to church. His handshake and warm smile was the epitomy of kindness.

Carroll helped to build this church back in the day, but now he resides in a memory care facility in Santa Clara. I found Carroll eating dinner in the dining area, and he immediately, after greeting me, noticed my guitar.

“Are we going to sing?” he asked hopefully

“Well, maybe,” I said. “After you finish eating. Maybe you and I can go over there in the other room and sing a few of your favorite hymns.”

“I don’t want to finish eating,” he told me. “Singing is better than eating. And I want everyone to sing...NOW” he added.

I soon realized that he wanted the whole dining room to sing with us. I tried to defer, but he insisted.

“Ask them,” he said pointing to a staff member. “Ask them if you can play – for everyone...now”

So I asked. And it turned out that we did exactly what Carroll wanted. In between the creamed corn and the applesauce desert...The entire dining room erupted in song as we sang Amazing Grace, He’s Got The Whole World in his hands, and other classic favorites.

Even the staff were singing and drumming the table in rhythm.

And I watched Carroll as we sang. He is weak. He has not been well. But he was singing with all his heart –as well as watching the people in that room that he had called together in that moment...

He was watching everyone *intently*, looking from right to left; wanting everyone to join in – wanting everyone to be included in experiencing joy.

Love is kind.