

Children's Moment *Show We Care: Kindness, part 1*

Good morning, boys and girls. I hope you're enjoying summer. This morning we're starting some new lessons. The topic is caring for other people. Jesus cares for us and he taught us to care for God and for others.

Can you think of a word that means the same thing as caring?

I have one on my sign here ... it's the word "kindness." Maybe you can write the word kindness or draw a picture of someone who is kind. It might be your grandma or grandpa, your mom or dad or your best friend.

When we are kind, we show concern about the well-being and feelings of another person. People who are warmhearted or considerate are kind.

"What does kindness look like?

People who are kind:

- Refuse to tease or make fun of others.
- Show concern when someone is sad.
- Treat everyone fairly.
- Do things that make others happy."¹

When we are kind to others, we're doing the same thing Jesus does for us. That makes Jesus happy. It makes the person we're being kind to happy. And it will make you happy, too.

Why don't you practice kind this week? Do one kind thing for someone every single day. Ask your Mom or Dad if you need ideas. I'll ask you about it next Sunday.

Let's pray ...

Jesus, make me a kind person, caring, helpful and generous to everyone. Help me to be considerate and always think about how my conduct affects others. Help me care how others feel so I am giving and forgiving. As a kind person, I want do good deeds without thinking about a reward. Help be to be kind to others. In Jesus' name, amen.

¹ Shimek Elementary, Iowa City, Iowa, December 2011

Message: "Why We Care"

Have you ever heard of "raisin rugby"?

Dr. Jeff Myers, author of *Understanding the Culture*, shares this story:

"I learned one of the most important lessons of my life from chickens. Several years ago, we purchased a home in the country. Naturally, we decided to get chickens. We didn't expect them to arrive in the mail, but they did - in a box about the size of a frozen dinner.

We housed them in a much bigger box in our laundry room where they provided endless hours of entertainment for our children. One day while fixing lunch I heard an unbelievable racket emanating from the box. Rushing in, I found my two-year-old daughter dropping raisins into the box. One chick discovered a raisin, grabbed it in its beak, and bolted. The others gave chase. Another stole the raisin and lit out, other chicks in hot pursuit.

'Wow, raisin rugby,' I thought.

Then I noticed my daughter had actually dropped a *handful* of raisins into the box, more than enough for each chick to have one. None noticed, consumed as they were in competing fiercely for that first raisin. These chicks couldn't contemplate abundance, even with raisins raining down on them. They had only one thought in their raisin-sized brains: others have it, I want it, I must take it."²

We aren't as different from animals as we might think.

People tend to be takers, not givers. We live life with a view of scarcity, not abundance and generosity. God, on the other hand, gives freely and generously. That's what grace is. All you have to do is open to the book of Genesis to see how God designed humanity and creation to thrive, giving us everything we need to be satisfied and happy.

God equips us to be fruitful and bring joy to creation and one another. Tragically, like the rugby chickens, our predecessors chose to be stingy, jealous and selfish. We've followed suit ever since.

² <https://www.summit.org/resources/articles/why-should-we-care/>

There's good news: God gives us another chance. That's what redemption is. Jesus offers the grace and opportunity for us to have our identity changed from being takers to being the givers God made us to be. When that happens to individuals, communities and even nations, God enlarges our vision. We get new eyes, a new heart and a new understanding.

We rediscover an ancient secret: caring changes our lives for the better. Jesus shows us the way. Caring the way Jesus cares goes beyond ourselves. You aren't left out, but it's more than that. Caring the way Jesus cares means caring about what God cares about.

This is why we care about black lives. This is why we care about Asian lives and native American lives. This is why we continue to talk about racism, wearing masks during a pandemic, income inequality, gender, age and ability bias and prejudice. We're still talking about those things because we care. We know things aren't right, something has to change. It's time.

During this series, we're going to turn our attention to the needs of the world and ask whether what the Bible says actually matters and what we ought to do about it. To be clear, I'm not offering a plan with a clever way for you to save humanity. It's actually the opposite. I'm inviting you to stop playing God and start engaging the world around us based on God's design for it and for us. It's not enough to merely start caring. We must care well.

With that premise, let's start at the beginning. I'm using the method recommended by Simon Sinek. Let's start with "why."

Why care? The answer to this question ties to the reason why we gather – in person or online, to worship God on Sunday morning. It's connected to the reason why we follow Jesus each day, imitating his way of thinking, speaking and acting.

Why we care is rooted in what we believe. We care because God cares. And God made us to as well. We're made to be in relationship, first with God, then with other people and with creation itself. We aren't

isolated, alone or forgotten. There's more to life. We're made to be spiritual beings, connected to the source of life and giving life to others.

The source of life is God. Beginning with Genesis, we see the story of how God designed and created the world. God saw it was good. Throughout the Bible, God is affirmed as the source of goodness. And, when we get to the revelation given to John, we see God's nature and relationship with humanity on display. A crowd of people from every nation, tribe, people and language will gather to worship and praise God Almighty for the victory over evil (Rev. 7:7-9).

Paul explains why we care in his letter to a group in Rome.

He writes, "*Brothers and sisters, we have an obligation, but it isn't an obligation to ourselves to live our lives on the basis of selfishness. ... All who are led by God's Spirit are God's sons and daughters. You didn't receive a spirit of slavery to lead you back again into fear, but you received a Spirit that shows you are adopted as his children. ... We are God's heirs and fellow heirs with Christ....*" (Romans 8:12,14, 15a,16a). We're part of the divine family. Jesus is our kuya, our older brother. Caring for others is part of who we are, what we do.

This sounds good to people who are believers. For those who don't believe, who aren't in touch with their spiritual side, this sounds like "pass the Kool-Aid." There's a lot of fear and its counterparts – frustration and anxiety, present in the world today.

A lot of us have false images of God. Many of these images come from the way we were raised and our experiences. We may see God as distant and uncaring. Or we may see God as rigid and vengeful, seeking to destroy those who won't obey. We may see God as a perfectionist, only allowing those who follow an arcane set of rules to be part of the club. God is much more than we can imagine. Even better, God cares.

Jesus tells us God cares (John 3:16-17). God cares so much that God entered the world in the form of a human, Jesus, to live with us, walk with us, laugh and cry with us, to experience life as a human. God cares and Jesus knows how hard life is at times.

Jesus cares for you (1 Peter 5:7). He didn't come to condemn you or to create barriers so all you can do is fail. Jesus didn't come to point fingers or to make you feel badly about yourselves. Jesus loves you. He cares for you. Jesus knows how difficult life can be. He suffered greatly during his life and died in a publicly humiliating way. Jesus knows. You can take your fear, anger, frustration, anxiety, disappointment and suffering to him. Jesus won't judge you. He will listen and help your spirit to find a place of safety and grace. Jesus wants you to know your life will be better when you believe in God and follow him. That opens the doors to acceptance, grace and hope.

Caring makes lives better. Jesus shows you the way. But just as God isn't selfish with grace and mercy, we can't be selfish, either. To have loving, caring relationships that make our lives better, we must believe in those relationships and be present in them in a real way. When we love and care for others in the same way God loves and cares for us, the relationship we build makes their live and our lives better. Sometimes in big ways, other times in small ways.

Caring for others makes us better people. We're better partners, spouses, siblings, parents, friends, neighbors and citizens.

Caring for others makes lives better. We speak up and stand up for others, looking to do good because it's right. That's what God wrote on our hearts.

Caring for others gives life. When we care for others without regard for their skin tone, sexual orientation, age, gender, language or ability, that's true care. We don't do it because see ourselves as better, but we recognize we're all God's children. We all need God's care.

We care we pass on the blessings God gave us: spiritual life in abundance now and for all eternity. There are no limits or bounds on God's love.

Why do we care? Because love shows us the way.

I invite you find ways to show you care for someone every day.

Let's make it a 40-day challenge. Try doing random acts of kindness for 40-days. We'll ask you to share your stories on August 30th.

Will you join me?

God cares. Go to God in prayer and Jesus will show you the way.

Let us pray silently together ...

Reflection & Prayer

"Jesus, gentle and humble of heart, you visit every human being to reveal God's love.

Jesus, goodness without end, you liberate captives, you pardon our sins.

Jesus, our rest and our refuge, your yoke is easy and your burden light.

Jesus, sent by God, you heal our blindness.

Jesus, living bread, you nourish our hearts by your words.

Jesus, you came to light a fire on the earth.

Jesus, risen from the dead, you share with us your joy.

Jesus, you are the Way, the Truth and the Life."³

In his name we pray. Amen.

³ https://www.taize.fr/en_article5806.html

A few words about re-opening:

- We owe our thanks to Margaret Turner, the Church Council, and particularly to our See a New Church team, who did great work looking ahead to see what we might become when we re-open.
- There's a measure of good you need to hear.
 - Last month, we reached 1,500 people online, 700 engaged in a meaningful way.
The average #people we reach online is 380/week
The average #people who engage online is 240/week
Last week was our all-time high: 1,300 people and counting
 - We will continue online services.
This has become a new expression of our community.
- That said, we do miss seeing one another. There will be a day and time when we will be able to resume – slowly at first, but with care, love and lots of grace.
 - Stay with us. Be intentional about inviting, connecting and engaging with one another and with new people. Send that friend an invitation to join a watch party online and chat about the service together. Write some a note or give them a call
 - Most of all, be in prayer for those who ill, the families of those who have died, and especially for our healthcare workers and other essential workers, who are once again at high risk as they serve and care for us.

Revelation 7:9-12 (CEB)

After this I looked, and there was a great crowd that no one could number. They were from every nation, tribe, people, and language. They were standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They wore white robes and held palm branches in their hands. They cried out with a loud voice:

“Victory belongs to our God
who sits on the throne,
and to the Lamb.”

All the angels stood in a circle around the throne, and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell facedown before the throne and worshipped God, saying,

“Amen! Blessing and glory
and wisdom and thanksgiving
and honor and power and might
be to our God forever and always. Amen.”

Romans 8:12–17 (CEB)

So then, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation, but it isn't an obligation to ourselves to live our lives on the basis of selfishness. If you live on the basis of selfishness, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the actions of the body, you will live. All who are led by God's Spirit are God's sons and daughters. You didn't receive a spirit of slavery to lead you back again into fear, but you received a Spirit that shows you are adopted as his children. With this Spirit, we cry, "Abba, Father." The same Spirit agrees with our spirit, that we are God's children. But if we are children, we are also heirs. We are God's heirs and fellow heirs with Christ, if we really suffer with him so that we can also be glorified with him.