

Children's Moment *Show We Care: Kindness part 4*

Good morning, girls and boys. We're continuing our lesson on caring for others through kindness.

Did you practice "Let's Be Kind" this week? Let's sing it together.

The words are on screen.

"Let's be kind, let's be kind,
In our heart, and in our mind,
To our family, to our friends,
May our kindness never end."¹

I hope you and your family had fun writing down the kind things you did last week and then reading them together. If you didn't get to it last week, that's okay. You can try this week or find your own way to do it.

We've been talking about ways we can be kind. We know that being kind is good for other people. Did you know that being kind is good for you?

Bernard Meltzer, a famous radio host, said this: "There is no better exercise for your heart than reaching down and helping to lift someone up."

Jesus showed us how to live by the way he cared for other people. One time, when he was traveling, he stopped and saw a large crowd. Matthew wrote down what happened, "... [Jesus] *had compassion for them and healed those who were sick.*" Jesus didn't care for a reward or for people to tell him how good he was. Jesus didn't even do it so they would follow him. Jesus did it because he loved them and he wanted to show that he cared for them.

When we show other people that we care for them, we're loving them the same way Jesus loves us. We don't do it for a reward or a pat on the back. We care for other people because it makes our heart better and stronger. We're more like Jesus. And that's a very good way to be.

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 me to be kind to others. In Jesus' name, amen.

¹ *Ibid*

Message: "Do You Care?"

You can make a difference in the world.

You just have to choose how you want to make a difference.

Caring is one of the best ways we can make a difference. When we show hospitality to others, they respond. One of my favorite examples of this is the story of Lydia from Luke's narrative (Acts 16).

Paul was a road warrior. On this trip, he started in Derbe, then went on Lystra, where he met a young man named Timothy. Paul traveled with friends from town to town. He went to Phrygia, then through the region of Galatia. Paul briefly stopped in Mysia and ended up at the seaport of Troas. From there he took a ship to Samothrace, landing at New City and then walked to Philippi, a Roman colony, where they stayed several days. That's where the event happened.

Reading from Luke's narrative, *"On the Sabbath, we left the city and went down along the river where we'd heard there was to be a prayer meeting. We took our place with the women who had gathered there and talked with them. One woman, Lydia, was from Thyatira and a dealer in expensive textiles, known to be a God-fearing woman. As she listened with intensity to what was being said, the Master gave her a trusting heart - and she believed!"*

After she was baptized, along with everyone in her household, she said in a surge of hospitality, 'If you're confident that I'm in this with you and believe in the Master truly, come home with me and be my guests.' We hesitated, but she wouldn't take no for an answer" (vv13-15, MSG).

How many of us would trust someone we didn't know? Paul and his companions did. They cared. So they went to a non-Jewish business woman's house to stay as her guests. I believe Lydia is a wonderful model for us. She took her entire household, including her staff, to a prayer meeting. That shows she cared for their well-being, physically and spiritually. Lydia was baptized, setting an example they chose to follow. Clearly, she was a force to be reckoned with, a person of energy and intensity. After all, Lydia wouldn't take "no" for an answer. She wanted to know more about Jesus. What a role model for us today!

We're concluding our sermon series "Show We Care" with a simple question: Do you care?

You may be like Paul and his companions, traveling from place to place to help people, showing them care and love. Or you could be like Lydia, established, rooted and comfortable in your household, caring for old friends and making new friends, showing them love and care. God gives each of us unique spiritual gifts, skills and experiences to help us discover the way we're made to care.

I know you're a caring people from experience. One way I know you care is through your generous support for the students at Parkridge Elementary this summer and Raney Elementary during the year.

Another way I know you care is through your gifts and offerings in support of the ministries of our church. Our church has been blessed to have the financial resources to carry us through the pandemic. We're doing better at being part of the United Methodist connection, supporting United Methodist ministries in Southern California and around the world through our apportionments.

You support our scouting ministries, Vacation Bible School, the Sierra Service Project, our United Methodist Women's and United Methodist Men's groups.

You show you care through your support for Mozart Adevu, our missionary in Africa.

You reach out to members of the congregation. That's what friends do for friends. It's what knits our congregation together and connects Corona United Methodist Church to our community.

Together, we can do great things. You are part of this community through your prayers, presence, giving, service and witness. These are good works. Thank you for showing you care. But I have to ask ...

What would Jesus do? Following Jesus gives us joy, but as you well know, we grow best when we stretch and are challenged to take another step, and then another ... and another. You know what that feels like. Mothers wait nine months to give birth to children. Hikers and runners know the pain of going the distance to get to a finish line. Those

looking for work know the endless hours and effort it takes to get the job offer. Caregivers know the loss, frustration and joy that comes from helping others, day in and day out.

Caring for others isn't easy. We have step outside of our comfort zone, refusing to rest on what we've done before. That's why Jesus said, *"Love one another the way I loved you. This is the very best way to love. Put your life on the line for your friends"* (John 15:12-13, MSG). Let's run the race to it's conclusion, showing we willingly and freely care.

Paul, the greatest missionary who ever lived, gives us a clear understanding of what it means to care for others. He said, *"Even though I'm free of the demands and expectations of everyone, I have voluntarily become a servant to any and all in order to reach a wide range of people: religious, nonreligious, meticulous moralists, loose-living immoralists, the defeated, the demoralized - whoever. I didn't take on their way of life. I kept my bearings in Christ - but I entered their world and tried to experience things from their point of view. I've become just about every sort of servant there is in my attempts to lead those I meet into a God-saved life. I did all this because of the Message. I didn't just want to talk about it; I wanted to be in on it!"* (1 Cor. 9:22-23, MSG)

We don't care for others because they're targets or to reach some kind of goal. We care for others because it's the right thing to do. We know our lives will be better when we care for others the same way other believers cared for us. There's a deeper connection when we follow where the Holy Spirit leads and guides us. The compassionate labor of caring invites us to join God in the spiritual work of the kingdom. God does the greater part. We get to be God's agents, offering hope to a world that's tired, disillusioned and confused.

The hard part is that Jesus calls us to care for others, even those we may not like. John recorded Jesus' words, *"You're familiar with the old written law, 'Love your friend,' and its unwritten companion, 'Hate your enemy.' I'm challenging that. I'm telling you to love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the energies of prayer, for then you're working*

out of your true selves, your God-created selves. This is what God does. [God] gives [the] best ... to everyone, regardless: the good and bad, the nice and nasty. If all you do is love the lovable, do you expect a bonus? Anybody can do that. If you simply say hello to those who greet you, do you expect a medal? Any run-of-the-mill sinner does that.

In a word, what I'm saying is, Grow up. You're kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you" (Matthew 5:43-38, MSG). That sets the bar high. Don't be afraid or stressed out. Trust and rely on God for nothing is impossible with God.

How do we interpret Jesus' words today, in an uncertain world?

We're battling the challenges of COVID-19. We're learning new ways to worship and connect. We're learning that saying Black Lives Matter takes work to really mean it and change the way we live. We're learning to be anti-racist. We learning what it means to be a reconciling congregation, openly embracing our LGBTQIA+ relatives and friends. We stand in solidarity with the #MeToo movement. We seek immigration reform so families won't be separated. We strive for climate justice to heal the planet. I'm not speaking politically, but from the view of seeking justice with peace. We may disagree on the means, but the need for hope lies at the heart of all our human struggles.

These are important ways you can show you care. The path won't be easy. It's going to get more difficult before it gets better. One thing to note: don't try to take all of these things on. Not everyone is suited or equipped to take on some of the challenges. It's better to follow a good leader with a vision, offering care and hope to those in need. We can create environments and places for people to gather with love.

I do encourage you to take up a cause. Be an advocate. Be part of a movement to bring peace with justice in God's name. Loving each other means being willing to listen without arguing. Listen and look for the ways God's Spirit is already at work. Trust God and believe. Let the Lord lead your heart. When you do, the good work you do will find it's way into our community and world. We can make a difference. Let's show we care by the love and grace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Let us pray silently together ...

Reflection & Prayer

“For peace in the world and the liberation of all people, Lord, we pray.

That the leaders of the Churches may tirelessly seek visible unity among Christians, Lord, we pray.

For honesty in political life, for justice in society, Lord, we pray.

For those who toil to earn their daily bread, Lord, we pray,

For those without work or resources, Lord, we pray.

For those with no family or home, Lord, we pray.

For those who suffer from loneliness or abandonment, Lord, we pray.

For those who are oppressed or maligned, Lord, we pray.

For those who work with the poor, with foreigners and with the excluded, Lord, we pray.”²

For our Black, Native America and Asian brothers and sisters, who have faced and are facing prejudice and discrimination, we pray.

For our LGTBQIA+ colleagues, peers and friends, who are seeking affirmation and a safe place in society and even the church, we pray.

For those who are unable to speak out, those who are limited in their abilities and those whom we have neglected, we pray.

For all of us, who need your pardoning and healing grace, we pray.

In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

40-Day Kindness Invitation

- Do an act of kindness every day.
- Share your story on August 30th – send me your stories or send them to the office.

² https://www.taize.fr/en_article5806.html

Romans 10:9-13 (CEB)

Because if you confess with your mouth "Jesus is Lord" and in your heart you have faith that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Trusting with the heart leads to righteousness and confessing with the mouth leads to salvation. The scripture says, "All who have faith in him won't be put to shame. There is no distinction between Jew and Greek, because the same Lord is Lord of all, who gives richly to all who call on him. All who call on the Lord's name will be saved."

Acts 16:13-15 (CEB)

On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the riverbank, where we thought there might be a place for prayer. We sat down and began to talk with the women who had gathered. One of those women was Lydia, a Gentile God-worshipper from the city of Thyatira, a dealer in purple cloth. As she listened, the Lord enabled her to embrace Paul's message. Once she and her household were baptized, she urged, "Now that you have decided that I am a believer in the Lord, come and stay in my house." And she persuaded us.