

Fruit That Is Always In Season: Kindness Titus 3:3-8

³ At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. ⁴ But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. ⁸ This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.

Well, we're just about halfway through our sermon series on the **Fruit of the Spirit**. The fruit that we want to consider today is kindness.

What kind of fruit would you compare kindness to? **An apple?** Nah, an apple is too hard and looks like a baseball that you could whip at someone.

A lemon? No. Lemons are sour and kindness is sweet.

What about kiwi? Kiwi is soft and fuzzy on the outside and has a nice tart sweetness on the inside. Isn't that a good way to think of kindness? Of course the thing with kiwi is that it's easy to squish. Don't we feel that way about people who are kind? **We tend to think of them as softies—as people that you could easily run over and take advantage of. Perhaps that's why we don't practice kindness more often. We don't want others to think that we're pushovers.** But as we take a close look at our sermon text this morning, we're going to **learn that kindness is tough. It endures ridicule and rejection to deliver loving actions and words.**

So how exactly would you define kindness? **Is it being nice, polite, caring, good-hearted? Kindness is all of those things. The opposite of kindness is sternness—a smile versus a frown.** If you had to draw another picture of kindness, what would it look like? **Someone helping pick up items that have spilled out of the cart of another shopper? A grandmother laughing at the antics of her grandchildren as she hands them freshly-baked cookies?** The Apostle Paul drew a picture of kindness in our text. Did you see it? Look again. **“At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. ⁴ But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy” (Titus 3:3-5).**

Like a beautiful flower that pokes out of a manure pile, God's kindness appeared in the midst of sin—our sin. Paul did not say that “others” were once disobedient and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. No, he said that this is true for each one of us.

God's kindness to sinners like us is truly marvelous. And what exactly does God's kindness look like? In Jesus we see that kindness is more than a smile, it's doing something to benefit another. Think of the parable of the Good Samaritan. **The Samaritan showed kindness when he stopped to take care of that stranger who had been robbed and beaten. The Levite and the priest, on the other hand, showed indifference when they walked on by with their heads held high!**

We are, of course, to show kindness as the Good Samaritan had. Paul emphasized that truth in our text when he wrote: **“I want you to stress these things [that God showed kindness to us sinners], so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone” (Titus 3:8).**

It should be obvious that being kind is excellent and profitable for everyone, but perhaps this story will highlight that truth.

An elderly lady enjoyed going to the local post office because the employees there were so friendly. Once she was waiting in a long line to buy stamps just prior to Christmas. The man in line behind her said, **“Ma'am there's no need for you to wait in line; you can buy your stamps at the machine in the lobby.”** The woman said, **“I know, but the machine won't smile or ask about my arthritis.”** Sure the machine could dispense stamps, but it wouldn't dispense kindness like the postal employees were doing and that made a difference in that woman's life.

How about it fellow believers? Are you dispensing kindness on a regular basis? Or is this something you only do when you're in a good mood.

Paul says in our text that we are to devote ourselves to doing good. From the moment a Christian gets up in the morning one will say, **“How can I make the day go better for everyone I meet?”** Perhaps we start the day with that kind of resolve, but by late afternoon we’re tired and grumpy. Just remember your baptism. Listen to what the Apostle Paul had to say about that sacrament in our text. **“He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life”** (Titus 3:5b-7).

Through baptism God has poured out the Holy Spirit on us in generous measure. There isn’t a part of our lives that he doesn’t touch or influence.

He’s working on our hands so we help others.

He works on our lips so that we speak encouraging words and so we smile rather than scowl.

And most importantly he’s working on our hearts so that the kindness we show is genuine.

And why shouldn’t it be genuine? God has shown incredible kindness to humanity since the beginning. He made a beautiful world in which he placed us, and even after Adam and Eve rebelled, God showed kindness.

God wants us to show the same kind of kindness to others—even to those who are not deserving. God calls you to be kind even to that individual who is making your life very difficult right now. Being kind doesn’t mean that we ignore their sin. It does mean though that we don’t hold that sin against them. It means that we speak encouraging words to that person even if they should throw those words right back in our face. But who is up for such a challenge? You are! Because through baptism you are a child of God. Jesus once said: **“...love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked”** (Luke 6:35).

Indeed, God is kind to the ungrateful. We are living proof of that! God still gives us food even though we often complain about what’s for dinner. And he doesn’t rip the roof off our house even though we grouse that our house is not as nice as our neighbor’s place. It’s no wonder he calls us to be kind towards others, even to the undeserving.

But won’t others take advantage of you for being so kind? Oh perhaps they will from time to time, just as a little child might get a kick out of squeezing kiwi until the juice down his hand. But you aren’t defenseless like a little kiwi. God is watching over you and he will deal with those who take advantage of your kindness. Keep putting your trust in him, and keep thanking him for the everlasting kindness he has shown you in Christ. Amen.