

Fruit of the Spirit

Gal 5:16-26 (ESV)

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. **17** For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. **18** But if you are led by the Spirit, you are **not under the law**.

-- List of the traits of the flesh

19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, **20** idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, **21** envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

-- List of the traits of the Spirit

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control**; against such things there is no law.

24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

- We often read Paul setting up this moral duality (dual=two) (Rom, 1 Cor 6, Eph5 ...)
 - Contrasting act of the flesh and acts of righteousness.
 - Once we get over the over the initial shock of fire and brimstone we might pick up on the little details that he drops there – it opens up a new dimension.
- He lists off the fleshly and says such things will not inherit you the Kingdom of God.
- Then he lists the fruit and says, **23b** "against such things there is no law ... "
 - We have a pile of laws that reach to the moon about what one can and cannot do.
 - Laws against being patience, kindness, faithfulness hard pressed to find a few.
- If we live by the spirit we produce certain traits.
- If we live by the flesh (for the flesh) we produce a very different set of traits.
- Over the last 4 weeks we have talked about these traits. The fruit of the spirit.
- Today the fruit to investigate is Kindness.

PRAY

Kindness Defined

- Lucky for us this week is Random acts of kindness week
 - Anne Herbert coined the term "RAoK" in 1982 responding to the news stories about "random acts of violence" – Later becoming a new age-y children's book in 1993
 - Now there is a Random Acts of Kindness foundation, Free Hugs campaigns and "Kindness clubs" ---- Change the world one act at a time.
- So got curious and looked up all sorts of different cultures and beliefs to how Kindness fit in.
- Nearly universally accepted virtue – "nearly" because the study was not exhaustive.

- Hindu: Kindness is a god-like quality. –Rigveda (ancient Indian collection of Vedic Sanskrit hymns) 1500 BC
- *Siddhārtha (Buddha) had a cousin /brother in-law Devadutta - jealous of him. So he sends Nalagiri a mad elephant into the street to trample Buddha. By the power of kindness he subdues the elephant.*
- Zoro/as/trian: practices of virtue keeps chaos at bay
- Even the hugely influential atheist philosophe Nietzsche recognized kindness, “The most curative element in human interaction”

- Interesting because Kindness is fairly well accepted, not controversial. It is good.
 - Unlike say love, wisdom, joy – much more abstract concepts. They are debatable.
 - Kindness is straight forward.

- An act of friendly gesture, warm-heartedness, generosity, charitable or humane. Beneficial to the receiving party.

- And as I read through these I realized, I have heard sermons that just like this.
 - It could fit into anyone of these religions or beliefs.
 - ❖ One act of kindness perpetuates and impacts the world
 - ❖ It is your part in changing the world.
 - ❖ Here are some exercises, meditations or what not to help you be more kind.
 - Then strap on to the end – Because that is what Jesus did
- And sure I guess ... that can work, it is true – Jesus *did* and we *do* want to be more like Jesus.
 - It is good to be kind.
 - Due to God’s common grace there are universally understood *good* moral traits.
 - ❖ Common grace is a theological concept referring to the grace of God that is common to all humankind.

- But what that is really doing is teaching moralism.
 - Jesus was moral so you act moral.
 - Act morally and all will be well.
 - Rule of reciprocity (theory of social psychology); we pay back what we receive.
 - ❖ Life treats you how you treat it.
 - If you are more kind people treat you more kind.
- Jesus even says it; “Treat other as you wish to be treated.” (Lk 6:31, Mt 7:12)
 - The golden rule. It appears in all sorts of religions, beliefs and life styles.
- It is a good rule to live by. It does make the world a better place.
 - But at its roots it is another form of legalism, isn’t it?
 - This is where people will fall into the statement that Jesus is a great moral teacher.
 - ❖ Well ya – sure He is a great moral teacher.
 - ❖ **But** He is so much more.

- And I really don't think that this is what Paul is getting at when he says.
 - 23b ... against such things there is no law.
 - If we must be kind (among other traits) to be accepted by God, then we fall into a classic system of legalism. Were back to the Old Testament law.
 - Follow the law – obedience is salvation.
- Donnie has noted that in Paul's letter wrote to the Galatians, he writes "Fruit" in the singular.
 - This presents a very interesting inference.
 - Suggests that the fruit of spirit is one. They develop together as we mature.
 - That there isn't an unbalanced development.
 - ❖ You shouldn't find a mature Christian that is loving and gentle but is an unkind jerk.
 - ❖ Example, one who is so pleasant to their friends but lashes out at the slow clerk.
- Unbalance come from legalism.
 - Sure one may be kind, but not generous.
- Balance comes from the Spirit.
- James gives us a great example of this.

Jas 2:15-16 (ESV)

15 If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacks daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?

- When we put a focus on a specific virtue (which isn't a bad practice) we neglect the others.
 - We are attempting to "attach" the fruit to the tree
 - This week let's focus is kindness next gentleness next ... and next...
 - I'll put a sticker on my dash board or my desk to remember to be kind to those I work with or to be more gentle with my children.
 - But what about next month, next year? I've moved on to other things. I now my boss is frustrating me. My children have been disobedient.
- Now of course we go through seasons and cycles.
 - I don't want to present a perfectly balanced, flawless picture, where one never loses their temper when a new flavor of patience is strained out of me.
 - But the point is I am acting out of moralism (morals are king), legalism (the law is king)
 - ❖ Attaching kindness to the tree.
 - ❖ The tree isn't producing the fruit. It is not from the spirit – it's from me.
- Let me give you an illustration.
- Back in 2003 --- Kissed a bear.

STORY [Kissing Bear]
- I sat down in the passenger's seat ... looked over at Mara and said, I don't think I would ever do that again"
 - You see it is still a wild bear. Its behavior may have been modified.
 - ❖ BUT IT'S A BEAR! A Wild BEAR.

- ❖ It could react at any moment
- ❖ The owner even said, “don’t pet him, he don’t like being pet” [Kyra Bear]
- ❖ It could just ripped my daughters hand right off.
- Is a wild bear – with a modified behavior...for now
- We are still wild, just modified our behavior ... for now.

- Ivan Pavlov, 1901 ran an experiment where he would press a buzzer whenever he fed his dogs [Pavlov’s Dogs]

- But you can take the slobber out of the dog, but not the dog out of the slobber.
- You can teach a dog to dance for that matter, but they are still a dog.

- Here is how Jesus puts it
- Matt 23:25-26 (ESV)**
- 25 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. 26 You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean.

- Do you want to remain a dog or be changed, transformed?
- Let’s focus on the inside of the cup.
 - The cup filled with the Holy Spirit and overflowing
 - And from our abundance of the Spirit of God comes fruit.
- The essence of Kylan in no longer a slobbering dog, a wild bear subdued with apples.
- The essence of Kylan is more like Jesus.

- Let the “Cup of kindness” over floweth.

Eph 4:22 - 24; 4:30 - 5:2 (ESV)

22 ... put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, 23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24 and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

32 **Be kind** to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Eph 5:1 Therefore **be imitators** of God, as beloved children.

2 And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

HOW Do we do that?

- So here is the challenging part. How to make that concept practical.
 - Several times as I was writing this sermon I would get to this practical piece and realize I was just saying ... ‘So then be like Jesus by doing this that and the other.’

- And the solution is a little abstract. But honestly that is why it is not legalism.

- If it were $1 + 1 = 2$, then we would have a God vending machine.
- And we are limiting Jesus to the “moral teacher”
- We need to go to a level deeper. We need go to the root of the virtue.
 - ~~We need to find the crack in this Kantian wall. (where the noumenal and the phenomenal meet)~~
 - ❖ ~~Where the spiritual influences the practical.~~
 - ~~The more I have prayed about this during study, the more I realize it has everything to do with self or sacrifice.~~
- Let’s engage “Kindness” at its roots. God’s kindness.
- Let’s look at the usage of “Kindness” in scripture when it pertains to God’s kindness.
- **G5543: (*chrēstos* -- *h’ ris tos*): Good, Kind, Gracious**
 - Root: To make use of. [Useful or a practical virtue] – A functional, useful, practical grace.

Rom 2:4 (NIV)

3 Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? 4 Or do you show contempt for the riches of his **kindness**, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God’s **kindness** leads you toward repentance?

- This trait, this character of God (being kind) has a practical purpose. A motivating grace.
 - To call us to something better. To call us into repentance. Turn from a life of fleshly virtues (anti-virtues) to a live of Spiritual virtue.
 - To call us to a salvation He has prepared.
 - God’s Kindness: a graciousness that should move us.
- If we chase “kindness” in our word study back into the Old Testament there is yet another layer.
 - A very intriguing turn.
- **H2617: (*checed* -- *h’ esed*): Mercy, loyalty, **Faithful Love****
 - Root: Brought reproach, shown mercy. [Connotation of being humbled]
- We see the word here when Lot thanks the angles as they brought him out of Sodom.

Gen 19:17-19a

17 And as they brought them out, one said, “Escape for your life. Do not look back or stop anywhere in the valley. Escape to the hills, lest you be swept away.” 18 And Lot said to them, “Oh, no, my lords. 19 Behold, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have shown me great **kindness** by sparing my life.

- Saying in a sense, ‘I am humbled by your sparing my life.’
- And the word shows up in the Ten Commandments:

Exod 20:4-6 (ESV)

4 “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. 5 You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, 6 but showing **steadfast love** to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

- That steadfast love is simply seen as God's patience, faithfulness to love us unconditionally.
- On the next layer down it is a humbling mercy that He loyally brings to our attention.

Kindness Re-Defined

- Kindness is a grace that motivates, a forgiving patient grace that moves us to act.
- Kindness is a humbling mercy. A mercy that corrects our perspective from self to sacrifice.
- Now one final exercise, apply what we know to this scripture
- Jesus tells us to ...

Matt 11:29-30 (ESV)

29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy (*chrēstos*), and my burden is light."

[Yoke]

- Kind of paradoxical. His Yoke easy (gracious)?
 - A yoke is a mechanism to restrain – isn't it?
 - A controlling collar to pull a plow, a cart, some load.
- Yet Jesus uses the term (*chrēstos*) to describe this mechanism of His. Gracious, mercy
 - His yoke is gracious. His yoke is mercifully.
- It is a device made for two. For two in cooperation with each other.
 - To balance the work load and be more productive.
- **Is it** Christ that forces the yoke on us?
 - I would say we are invited to don the yoke ourselves.
 - For it lightens our load – it is shared with Christ.
 - It is gracious and merciful. It is a yoke of kindness.
- **Don Christs yoke of kindness.**
 - I guess that is the practical piece right there.
 - I can say, so imitate Christ by knowing Him – read scripture, pray, attend church.
 - ❖ But we can do all these things and not be transformed
 - ❖ Because it is about a personal surrender.
 - ❖ A personal surrender to the King – the King of all creation.
- Our reluctance to do so is our control. "But I don't want to give up my freedom"
 - What is freedom? What are your "rights"?
 - Freedom can come only from the authority who owns it.
 - You have to have your perspective correct.
 - Are you free in flesh? Free in sin?
 - Pairing with Jesus **is** freeing!
- You see – you have to accept that – this is not the presentation of a moral teacher.

- This is the statement of one who **is** the *root* of kindness not just kind.
 - Heb 1:3 **He is** the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...
- This isn't an anecdote from a great moral teacher.
 - This isn't like Buddha subduing the elephant with a mastered virtue.
- This is about the character of Jesus. Who is (as it says there in Hebrews) the exact representation of God. --> He **Is** kindness.
 - Jesus Christ is the exact imprint of the nature of God!
 - He wasn't a moral teacher that said – live this way – live that way.
- No He (the creator) became a human – left His house of glory to come and share your yoke.
- One of the reasons He did this was to free us from the law.
 - There is no law against the fruit of the Spirit.
 - Not because they are good, but because they are the very character of God.
- It isn't about *being* kind.
 - This is about being transformed into kindness.
 - You **are** kind because it is a trait of Jesus, Who has filled you with the abundance of His character.
- Don Christ's Yoke of kindness. Surrender your attempts to control
 - Let the character of God transform you.
 - He will cleanse you – wash you – fill it with His abundance of His character.

PRAY