

Kindness
Rev. Mark Willig
Pastor Emeritus

Kindness. Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." (Ephesians 4:32) It is a little thing, kindness. An example I heard was, "Say 'thank you' to the ones who are working to provide food and the other necessities of life." There are workers in the grocery stores overwhelmed by the demands. Show kindness. You, yourself are under a lot of stress. Think of how it eases the tension when someone else shows you a small kindness, and act toward your neighbor with kindness.

It is significant that Paul wrote this to the Ephesians. They were in a hostile culture where odd cults were all over the place, and Christianity was becoming treated with more and more suspicion. Paul himself was writing from prison. And he writes to them in order to help bind them together so they could endure. And Paul writes of this fruit of the Spirit, "Be kind to one another."

It is surprising how much of an impact kindness can have. Even in worldly settings, little acts of kindness received can inspire further acts of kindness passed on to others. There are examples that go by the name of "pay it forward." A customer in a drive-through tells the worker they want to pay for the meals of the people in the next car. A man buys coffee and buys another one for the next veteran who comes in.

But Paul says more. He says, "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." "As God in Christ" connects the whole matter to the plan of salvation. It is kindness in Jesus Christ toward us. Paul talks about, "when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior ... appeared, He saved us ... according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit." (Titus 3:4-5) Kindness is bound up in the work of salvation in Jesus Christ. And kindness is part of what God is working within us, as the Holy Spirit plants, grows, and develops in us everything that is ours through Jesus.

So show kindness. Within the body of Christ, this fruit of the Spirit binds us together, and it is true that we need each other even in the best of times. Show kindness. To those outside the body of Christ, it shines the light and the love of Christ to a sin-darkened world.