

Intro:

Two weeks ago we talked about peace and forgiveness. Have you ever noticed that most people can admit they struggle with forgiveness or impatience? That one's tough, but you hardly ever hear anyone say that they struggle with kindness? You don't hear a lot of people say, "Yeah, I'm really...unkind." We all think we're at least a little kind, I mean, we're not *unkind*. The natural affection of kindness is more deceptive than we think. Look:

David Denby, the New Yorker, movie critic of some actors who get to a certain stage in their career and want to play characters of pure kindness, goodness, and filled with pure concern for other people. He points out that almost all these movies are terrible: sentimental, gooey. "Actors forget how hard it is to make extreme goodness dramatically interesting." He says, "There is a kind of goodness that seems artificial, false, forced, and unreal."

Ian McKellen: "Good characters are very, very difficult to play... Do you know any really good people?... (I think I know a couple) Don't you look at those people and just wonder about them and say, 'Gracious me! What is their motive for being like that?!... How does an actor figure out someone like that?... (You know, I have to admit, often times I find them, well, boring) Ah, you see, there it is! It's really good people who are the inhuman ones, not the really wicked people."

He is getting at what Paul is getting at in 1 Corinthians 13 and Galatians 5. There is a type of kindness that appears as kind, but is really a way of getting power over people and esteem for you.

So, why is this fruit of a transformed heart included in these lists...and immediately following patience? Today we'll look at kindness and first of all, what it is not, then what it is, and finally how to get it.

1. What Kindness is NOT
 - a. Kindness is not about me
 - i. Kind acts are not always truly kind.
 1. Moral restraint is not the same as a transformed heart
 2. Altruistic acts are not even necessarily kind
 - a. 1 Cor 13:3 – giving possession to the poor, surrendering my body for the sake of another
 - b. Sounds loving, doing something that benefits another, but apparently this can be done without love
 - ii. C.S. Lewis in the *Four Loves*: If you do someone a kindness to show him, or others, or yourself, what a great chap you are, or to put them in your debt, and then you sit down and wait for gratitude....All natural affection is idolatrous and needs to be purified.
 - iii. There is a kind of kindness that never deals with the selfishness of the heart. It is really all about me.
 1. When kind acts are done with the motive of appearing kind or good to others, oneself, or even to God! It is about me, my reputation, my glory, my edification.
 2. Kindness that is done to appear moral
 - a. Even Nietzsche understood this and was wary of moralistic kindness: "Subjection to morality can be slavish or vain and self-interested...and thus not moral at all."
 3. This is what Denby and McKellen were talking about: A kindness that is artificial and forced.
 - b. Kindness is NOT *niceness*
 - i. Niceness does what makes people *happy*, but kindness does what really benefits the other person.
 1. Niceness (sometimes confused with kindness) really operates out of a deep fear and insecurity. I will be nice to others so that they will be happy with me.

2. When my “kind” words are intended to make people feel good about themselves or about me, *rather than* feel good about Christ and Him as the Redeemer.
 3. This is where we lack giving the proper biblical offense because it isn’t nice.
 - a. “The letter of the law kills, but the Spirit brings life” and everybody knows the Spirit is nice.
 - b. The Spirit comes to convict of sin, righteousness, and judgment.
 - i. That is not all that He does, but neither is it any less!
 - ii. Conviction, because of JC’s blood, is not devastating
 - ii. Sometimes what really benefits another person is not what makes them happy
 1. Interventions
 2. Removing a splinter from a child’s hand
 - iii. We live in a church age where love has been sentimentalized to the point where even we Christians cannot recognize biblical Christlike love.
 1. Christians are supposed to be “nice”
 - a. Telling somebody they’re wrong isn’t nice, so therefore is not loving
 - b. Church discipline isn’t nice, therefore it isn’t loving
 2. Here’s the problem: God isn’t “nice”, God is loving
 - a. And not loving in the same way in all situations (from D.A. Carson’s lectures in *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God*)
 - i. Trinitarian Love – The Father to the Son, not redemptive love or merciful love, for the Son does not need to be redeemed or forgiven (John 3:35; 17:5,24)
 - ii. Providential Love – care of Creation, given to the just and the unjust, but not redeeming love or else everybody is saved
 - iii. Love of Humanity – seeking, beckoning love universally calling all to repentance (John 3:16; 1 Tim 2:4), **see Matt 15:1-14; 23:13ff**
 - iv. Redeeming Love – Unconditional choice to covenant with and adopt His children through the new birth of the Holy Spirit, repentance from sin and idols, and faith in Jesus Christ (Deut 10:14-15; Mal 1:2-3; 1 John 4:10; Eph 1:3-5; 5:25)
 - v. Disciplinary Love – conditional upon obedience, we can be outside of this kind of love of God (Jude 1:21; John 15:9-10 note the relationship between abiding in love and obedience)
 - b. Kindness responds to brokenness with healing medicine, not with mere sentimentality and the half-truths of niceness that make us happy with our idols or feeling content living in sinful disobedience (Heb 12:14; 1 John 3:6-8)
 - c. Jesus was not nice
 - i. Matthew 15:1-14
 - ii. Matthew 23:13ff
 - iii. Luke 14:1ff
- c. So, there is a kind of “kindness” that is all about me
 - i. It’s about people respecting me
 1. Look at how moral I am! To gain esteem or manipulate power over other people. Proud, disdainful, not genuine, selfish in arrogance
 - ii. It’s about people being happy with me
 1. Please like me because I’m a nice person. The kind acts are not about others, but about me. Artificial, forced, not genuine, selfish in self-pity and fear
 - iii. It’s about me not feeling guilty
 1. Why do I give \$\$ to the woman begging on the street? Or the kid doing fundraising at my door?
 2. Is it really kindness, or merely guilt-avoidance that is self-centered?

2. What is Kindness?
 - a. Kindness is doing what is good for another, regardless of the benefit to me
 - i. Meeting the needs of another
 1. Eph 4:29-5:1
 - a. Note that it is closely aligned with forgiveness, making peace
 - b. “tenderhearted” – feeling, compassionate, empathic, what hurts the one whom you love, hurts you, too.
 - c. Opposed to rotten talk, bitterness (holding onto unforgiveness), wrath (explosive rage), anger (revenge for *personal* injustice), clamor (loud fighting, yelling), and slander (gossip confessing another’s sins), and malice (general evil, spiteful feelings)
 - ii. Befriending Each Other
 1. John 15:13-15
 2. Being honest, transparent, safe to confront
 3. Loving at cost to yourself, not letting another person down
 4. Jesus withdrew a lot, but when the crowds followed Him, He had compassion on them (Mark 1:32ff)
 - iii. Being Visionary With People
 1. Eph 4:29-32
 - a. “building up” or “edification” is literally “house building”
 - b. You need a blueprint in order to build a house, a vision of what can be...and will be by the Holy Spirit of God
 - c. Can you see the capacity for the Lord’s miraculous growth, beauty, maturity in others? Do you see people with the possibility of greatness, or are they simply less glorious *than yourself*?
 2. Look at the strange mention of grieving the Holy Spirit in this passage
 - a. The Holy Spirit is grieved by unkindness
 - b. BECAUSE His purpose and work is the sealing of believers for the Day of Redemption
 - i. Future day where all that is broken will be repaired, when all that is wrong will be made right, when all that is sad will be made happy!
 - ii. He is moving people toward their glorious beauty of that day. He sees their future, as worked and carved by Himself, and unkindness treats His treasured artwork as worthless and insignificant.
 1. His work is holiness: Like Father, like son
 2. “Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect”
 3. “Be holy as I am holy”
 4. “Forgive as God, in Christ, forgave you”
 - iii. Therefore, unkindness saddens the Holy Spirit
 3. C.S. Lewis, “There are no ordinary people. You’ve never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations, these are mortal and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. It is a serious thing to remember that the dullest and the most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature, which if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship. Or else a horror or corruption which you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are in some degree helping each other to one or the other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and circumspection proper to them that we should conduct all our dealings with each other: All friendships, all loves, all play, all politics.”

Are you willing to enter into every encounter with the awe and circumspection proper to this truth? How we relate to each other every day pushes each other to one of two places: eternal glory and beauty...or an eternal weight of terror.

What is the difference between the pinecone and the massive beauty of the redwood? One is a precursor to the other. The small, abrasive, and insignificant becomes the great, the wondrous, and the beautiful. Can you look around you? Can you see each person as a pinecone? Because once planted, and that is the key, once planted in God each and every pinecone will explode into something glorious and beautiful. That is what the Holy Spirit is working toward, and once we have this vision of people and their potential in the power of the Holy Spirit we will treat them like the Holy Spirit treats them, with the washing of water of the Word of God, the selective pruning of repentance and the fertilization of faith in Jesus Christ as the Source, Power, and Goal of our life.

3. How Do We Get It?

- a. As if sending you out the week before last to be more patient and forgiving wasn't enough, you thought kindness would be easy!
- b. First, we must know and trust the promise of God: "I will put my Spirit within you" and "I will not leave you alone as orphans"
 - i. The Holy Spirit is working within you to create a glory in you that exemplifies the beauty of Jesus Christ and all His joy
 1. The phrase "let them be put away from you" (wrath, slander, etc.) is passive, indicating that it is being by an outward subject upon us
 2. The H.S. is the power and source for the change of our hearts. That's why it's called the fruit of the Spirit.
 3. He has sealed us for that final Day. He will complete what He has begun!
 - ii. We continue forward with a bold humility. Boldness because we know that at the end of the story of our life is that God will be honored for the salvation of our souls and the healing of our woes. Boldness because we know that the Holy Spirit is working for us and He will not fail to produce holiness within us that glorifies our Savior who is our ultimate desire! And humble because we presently struggle and fail. We, too, are still pinecones, lacking the beautiful strength and towering stature that has yet to be formed completely in us, with repentance from our failures and the constant dependence upon Jesus as our Savior and King as our glory.
- c. Secondly, look again to the One who is Kind
 - i. Titus 3:3-7
 1. All that Jesus has done for us in the gospel: saved us according to his grace, washed us and renewed us by His Holy Spirit, justified us, adopted us, and gave us hope and eternal life is summed up as this: the *kindness* of God.
 2. Do you now see kindness? God did not save you because it benefited Him! Jesus loves you enough to die for you! Do you see sacrificial love? Do you see Him with arms opened to failures and to sinners, to pinecones who lack beauty, strength, and glory? Do you see Him with arms opened wide? They were nailed open!
 3. Look again to the One who is Kind and see others as God sees them: Though we fail Him time and time again, He loves us so much that He died for us. He loves so much that He will not leave us in a state of self-destructive sin, but will discipline us as His beloved children until we grow up into the maturity of the knowledge of the Son of God, to the praise of His glorious grace.