

Prayer of the Week:

O God, our refuge and strength, true source of all godliness: Graciously hear the devout prayers of your Church, and grant that those things which we ask faithfully, we may obtain effectually; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (Source: Book of Common Prayer 2019, Collects of the Christian Year, Proper Twenty-three)

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all whom you have made.

We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.

And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory throughout all ages. Amen.



Kindness & Goodness

October 11th

Intro

Since kindness and goodness are fruits of the Spirit, that must mean that God is kind and God is good.

Few claims that are met with more questions, doubts, and awkward side-eye than the claims that God is good and God is kind.

There are lots of reasons why people have a hard time believing these claims, but what cannot be denied is that part of the reason is they don't see these fruit in the lives of Christians.

New Way To Be Human

The book of Titus is a letter written by the Apostle Paul to a partner in ministry named Titus. Titus was tasked with helping the Christians on the island of Crete.

Crete was known in the ancient world as being a place of treachery, violence, and sexual corruption. In fact, the greek word for liar with "kretizo" which means, "to be a Cretan."

Titus' role was to speak to the house churches about how to faithfully live out the Good News of Jesus despite their growing up in a culture so contrary to the Gospel.

The goal was not to set themselves apart through culture wars. But they didn't want to fully assimilate into the culture either. Titus invites them to faithful participation in culture.

Paul's main encouragement to Titus is this: Tell the Christians that the best way to be faithful witnesses is to demonstrate a new way to be human - and do that while participating in the culture.

Thus, the instructions we read in Titus 3....

We Are Kind Because God Has Been Kind To Us

As always, Paul's instructions have a theological foundation. It's not as though God was coming up with some rules for Christians to follow and "be kind" was among them. No! That's too shallow.

The reason you are to act in a particular way is because of who God is and what God has done! We are called to embody the kindness and goodness of God, because of the salvation we have received in Christ.

"The reason we are summoned to avoid speaking evil of people, not to be quarrelsome, and so on, is that we are ourselves creatures of God's generous love, and we we aren't showing that same generous, kindly, forgiving love we have obviously forgotten the path by which we've come." -N.T. Wright, Paul for Everyone, The Pastoral Letters, pg. 161

Kindness Toward "Outsiders"

Having received the kindness and goodness of salvation from God, Paul says that believers in Christ should embody those same traits to others.

What's more interesting, however, is that these instructions are for how Christians are to treat those outside the faith ("outsiders").

This passage isn't calling you to be kind to those who are like you. This passage is calling you to be kind to those not like yourself.

Resist the temptation to reduce another human being down to their difference from you. Instead, see the full person, and show kindness to them based on the goodness of God.

Kindness Reveals God's Character To Others

When we confess Jesus as Lord, how we act toward others reveals what we we believe about God. It quite literally shows people what kind of God we believe in.

Let's make sure that we are showing the world the kind and loving God revealed to us in Jesus. The One who is hospitable and honors our humanity; even while calling us to give up lives lived in sin.

The greek word translated "kindness" literally means tender concern for others.

May our witness show that God has tender concern for others. May we not forget the path by which we've come.