

**Sermon**  
**Lanier Christian Church**  
**July 9, 2017 (Revision of January 13, 2008)**

**BE KIND! SLIDE# 1**

Ephesians 4:29-32

1969 was a dramatic year in our country for a lot of reasons. It was also the year that I started High School. And one of the hit songs of that year was a song sung by Glen Campbell called: *You've Got to Try a Little Kindness*

You got to try a little kindness  
Yes show a little kindness  
Just shine your light for everyone to see  
And if you try a little kindness  
Then you'll overlook the blindness  
Of narrow-minded people on the narrow-minded streets

That song really impacted me then and still does today. Kindness should be one of the hallmarks of our lives as believers. It should be a guiding principle in all that we do and say. When we show kindness, we are indeed showing the light of Christ's love.

The apostle Paul gave some very practical advice in his letter to the Ephesians:*SLIDE#2 "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen... Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling & slander, along with every form of malice" [Ephesians 4:29,31].*

We see people on TV and people all around us who are bitter & angry: angry at the world because it hasn't given them enough; angry at God because they think He hasn't

treated them fairly; angry at their spouses because marriage is not everything they expected it to be; angry at their children; angry at their neighbors; angry at their job. Angry!

So Paul gives a survival message that says, "If you want to make it, you can't live like that because it'll eat you alive."

Then in the very next verse he gives the antidote. To get rid of your hostility, your anger, your unwholesome words, do this – SL#3 ***"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" [Ephesians 4:32].***

Did you catch that? The 3 essential ingredients in getting rid of hostility & anger & negativity are: #1, be kind to one another; #2, be compassionate towards one another; #3, forgive each other.

### **1. BE KIND TO ONE ANOTHER SL#4**

Kindness is almost a lost art today, isn't it? So many people are rude and self-centered, worried about themselves, and not worried very much about others.

Listen to the words of the Apostle Paul in Titus 3:3, *"At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another."*

Sounds like it was written this year not 2,000 years ago, doesn't it? Paul even includes himself. He said, "We were hated and we hated one another. That's the way we acted

at one time. That's the way the world outside of Christ acted, too.

Then he goes on in vs. 4, SL#5 *"But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy."*

Did you hear that? It is only because of the kindness and mercy of God that we are saved. If God reacted to us the way we react to one another sometimes, He would have washed his hands of us long ago. But instead, He reached out to save us.

One of the earliest acts of kindness done for me happened when I was in the fifth grade. Every Christmas at school we would exchange gifts. Girls buy a girls gift and boys buy a boys gift. Then we drew names. I don't know how this happened but in first grade I got a girls coin purse as my gift. In second grade I opened a handkerchief. The third grade I got a candy cane. The fourth grade I got another handkerchief and in the fifth grade, my last year of gift exchanges, I got a can of right guard deodorant. The class had a good laugh. But I was embarrassed. I was devastated. I pouted. I whined. I complained. My best friend, Travis heard all of my complaints. I had made it through all the grades of elementary school at Christmas without ever receiving a decent gift.

That afternoon, several hours after getting home from school, there was a knock at the door. My friend Travis was standing there with a large wrapped gift for me. I opened it and there was the biggest model aircraft carrier I had ever seen. He had gone to the local dime store with his mom

and bought the biggest plastic model he could find...just for me! (The kind you put together with airplane glue). I was overwhelmed. I cried. I was thankful. I was moved. And to this day I've never forgotten the kindness of my friend. I don't know anything he said to me that day. I just know what he did.

Steve Sjogren, who wrote, *Conspiracy of Kindness* said, "For most Christians, doing evangelism is a lot like going to the dentist; no one really enjoys doing it, but it must be done once in a while. But anyone can do simple acts of kindness...People don't necessarily remember what they are TOLD of God's love, but they never forget what they have EXPERIENCED of God's love." (*Conspiracy of Kindness*, pp. 26,30)

## **2. BE COMPASSIONATE TO ONE ANOTHER. SL#6**

Elisabeth Elliot wrote a beautiful prayer, in "A Lamp for My Feet":

"Lord, break the chains that hold me to myself; free me to be Your happy slave – that is, to be the happy foot washer of anyone today who needs his feet washed, his supper cooked, his faults overlooked, his work commended, his failure forgiven, his grieves consoled or his button sewed on. Let me not imagine that my love for You is very great if I am unwilling to do for a human being something very small."

The word "compassion" simply means that your feelings become a part of my life, and I begin to share and understand what you feel, and what is going on inside of you. Our Bible says: "Be kind & compassionate to one another..." Remember, it is Jesus Christ who said, "Whatever

you did for these..., you did for me." [Matthew 25:40]

Kindness is where loving and impacting lives starts.

In a family torn apart by stressful situations and arguments among each other - "Be kind and compassionate to one another..."

In a business where the general rule seems to be "dog eat dog" - "Be kind and compassionate to one another..."

In a school where bullies sometimes ruin any student's day – "Be kind and compassionate to one another..."

In a community and nation where racial and political tension often occurs - "Be kind and compassionate to one another..."

In a world that seems to hold on to long-standing hatreds and division - "Be kind and compassionate to one another..."

We long for peace, real peace, lasting peace. But I'm convinced that there will be no such peace, as long as the Prince of Peace is ignored or unknown. We must demonstrate his work in our lives by being kind and compassionate.

### **3. FORGIVE EACH OTHER. SL#7**

Listen again to what Paul said, *"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" [Ephesians 4:32].*

The third item in Paul's daily survival kit message is to forgive each other, and I believe he had a reason for putting this last, because I don't think we can really forgive somebody until we have learned to be kind and compassionate toward them.

Now, all of us think kindness and compassion is a good idea. So is forgiveness. What an honorable virtue is forgiveness, until we have to practice it!

C.S. Lewis once said, "Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive."

SL#8 We are commanded by Jesus to forgive because forgiveness is all about love. Remember, the two greatest commandments are to love God and to love others. There is no way to forgive without loving, and there is no way to love without forgiving. We are all fallen humans, full of sin and selfishness, and if we are going to be around each other at all in loving relationships then we are going to have to learn to forgive. Just ask any couple who has been married for over a decade if you need to learn to forgive in order to keep love alive. If you are obeying God's command to love him and his creation, then you have to know how to forgive.

But, primarily we are commanded to forgive because God has forgiven us. We used to sing a song on Sunday nights that was a Camp song from decades ago:

"I owed a debt I could not pay. He paid a debt He did not owe. I needed someone to take my sins away...."

Ephesians 4:32, *"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."*

Colossians 3:13, *"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."*

Notice that in each of these scripture references what our standard is: to forgive as God has forgiven us. (Robert Warren)

Hal Lindsay once said: For me to fail to forgive myself or anyone else who has offended me is to imply that I have a higher standard of forgiveness than God, because whatever

it is that has so hurt me that I can't forgive it, God already has.

Clara Barton, founder of the American Red Cross, was reminded one day of a vicious deed that someone had done to her years before. But she acted as if she had never even heard of the incident. "Don't you remember it?" her friend asked. "No," came Barton's reply, "I distinctly remember forgetting it."

Paul said, "Be kind & compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you"

### **CONCLUSION**

Amy Nappa wrote in "Better Families" bulletin insert:

"We often think of God as powerful, just, and holy. But Romans 2:4 says that it's God's kindness – not his power and justice – that leads us to repentance. SL#9 He has compassion on us. He is sympathetic to our hurts and treats us kindly and gently. And because of this kindness, we want to be closer to him. We want to get our lives right with him."

God wants us to respond to His kindness...yes...but in addition to that, He wants us to demonstrate His kindness at work in our lives, by reaching out to be kind to others...to show them Christ.

A number of years ago, when I served as volunteer chaplain, I was called to come to the hospital for a difficult need. A young mother was giving birth to her first child – but for some reason, the child had died just hours before delivery.

This still-birth was hard for the mother for sure, but for the husband and parents as well. But there was a gentleman there, who I recognized from my years in working with Cub Scouting and I asked what his connection was and he said: "These are my dear friends...and I just need to let them know that I care. There's nothing I can do, but I can be here for them." That kindness in a most difficult situation further cemented a long lasting friendship.

Is there a kindness you can perform for someone else?  
Why not start today. Come to Jesus first, experience his kindness and forgiveness and then show Him to others!

