

The Golden Rule

Over the next 4 weeks we are going to be looking at 4 different ways to live out this most famous of all rules.

And we're going to start with Kindness, considering what kindness looks like through the lens of the Golden Rule.

When I was a Sunday school teacher in High School, I told my class about the story of the Good Samaritan. You know, the one where a man was beaten, robbed and left for dead. I described the situation in vivid detail so the class could catch the drama. In my mind the best next question I could ask was, "If you saw a person lying on the roadside, all wounded and bleeding, what would you do?"

There was a long silence. Then one little girl raised her hand, "I think I would throw up."

When we think about the story of the Good Samaritan, I really hope that's not the first thing that comes to mind. But maybe it's because we focus less on the man in the ditch and more on the Samaritan who helped him.

The Good Samaritan is a "feel good" story. It's a story of a good man helping someone along the road. It's a story of kindness and mercy. We'd all like to think we'd behave just like the Samaritan did in Jesus' story.

But with so many scriptures that urge us to be kinder, that can only mean one thing. Kindness is easier said than done.

This doesn't mean that people don't do kind things. But do they reach the level of kindness that Jesus wants?

Enter our passage today which contains The Golden Rule. Does anybody remember what the Golden rule says???

“Do to others as you would have them do to you.” **Luke 6:31**

Did you realize that Jesus wasn't the first to say something like this???

500 years before Jesus, Confucius said "Do not unto others what you would not wish done to yourself." The Buddhists said, "Putting oneself in the place of others, kill not, nor cause to kill." In the Old Testament Apocrypha in the book Tobit: "Do not do to anyone what you yourself hate." Finally, Rabbi Hillel (20 B.C.): "What is hateful to you, do not do to anyone else. This is the whole law; all the rest is only commentary"

At first glance, they seem to say exactly what Jesus said.

But let's look again: Confucius said, "DO NOT unto others". The Buddhists said: "Kill NOT". Tobit said "DO NOT DO to anyone what you'd hate". And Rabbi Hillel said "WHAT IS HATEFUL TO YOU..." don't do that.

What do you notice about these teachers? They basically said the same word "DON'T"

What did Jesus say? "DO".

So, with this, I hope what you can see that there is the major difference in God's concept of KINDNESS.

Most people think that kindness is going about your own business and not hurting anybody. But that's not God's kindness. God's kindness is the type that goes out looking for you.

You might be asking now. Well, aren't there people who DO good things for others? Who go "looking" for people to help?

Absolutely. Think about people who join the Peace Corp. Look at all the brave men and women helping out with Helene and Milton victims even as we speak.

How often have we heard stories of doctors going to help earthquake victims. Often, they are forced to treat patients with inadequate medical supplies. Surgeries performed on tarps laid out on the ground under the open sky.

It isn't difficult to find examples of good decent people doing wonderful things for people in need.

But even here there is a difference... Think about what we read in Luke 6:31-36

Right in the middle of this passage is where we find the "Golden Rule". But let's look at the verses that surround the Golden Rule.

"But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that.

And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' lend to 'sinners,' expecting to be repaid in full.

But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because HE IS KIND to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”

When Jesus talks about the Golden Rule, he’s NOT just telling His followers how to treat just any people, he’s telling them how to treat their enemies. Enemies who hate them. Enemies who curse them. Enemies who mistreat them

That just isn’t natural. Surely, we aren’t being asked to be nice to that jerk down the street.

But that is God’s type of Kindness. The kind that reaches out to a mean-spirited world.

Let’s get back to the story of the Good Samaritan. Does anyone remember the nationality of the man lying in the ditch? He was a Jew! And the man who showed compassion? A Samaritan.

Jews and Samaritans. They ain’t good neighbors. They hate each other. They call each other names. They avoid each other as much as possible. If a Jew and Samaritan are walking down the same side of the street, one of them passes over to the other side just to avoid talking to the other.

Would you believe that Jesus deliberately uses the parable of Samaritan helping his enemy as the example of how we ought to love our neighbors?

Kindness, it’s one of the most effective tools we have as Christians. Kindness is guaranteed to have significant impact on the people around us... because it just isn’t a “natural” response to mistreatment.

Who here thinks that because you go to church you are immune from being unkind.

Look at the story of the Good Samaritan – it's the religious people who ignore the man in the ditch.

A PRIEST and a LEVITE. Both were religious people. Both went to the synagogue every Sabbath day. Both faithfully gave tithes. Both studied the Torah rigorously.

But what did they do? They passed on the other side and ignored a man in need.

Being religious is no guarantee that we will be nicer people. It can help... but it won't necessarily change how you and I behave.

It's Paul in **Galatians 5** that offers the key. The fruit of Spirit. "the fruit of the SPIRIT is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness..."

The more of God's Spirit we have in our lives, the more we will exhibit joy, the more peace will rule in our lives, the more patient we will be with each other, and the kinder we will be to everyone, including our enemies.

This church family is our gas gauge. This is how we know if we're walking in the Spirit. **Galatians 5** is our gas gauge. If we are lacking in any one of fruits of the Spirit, then we've a got a problem, our gas gauge is running low. And then we need the God's Spirit gas station to refill our tanks.

How kind we are to others in what we SAY to them, how we TREAT them, and especially in how we THINK of them...Is how we reflect Christ in us. Let me say that again.

Jesus loved the sinners who wanted to change. Jesus touched the ugly and the deformed that no one else wanted to touch. Jesus showed compassion even for His enemies from the cross "Father forgive them..."

That is the type of kindness and mercy God wants us to show to others.

Those that were in the early church called themselves followers of Christ. But they were so KIND that sometimes people called them ‘followers of kindness.’”

Friends, being religious will not make us kind people. It’s when we walk in the Spirit... when we try to treat others the way Jesus treated others. That’s when people will know to whom we belong.

It was shortly after the Korean War ended and a night watchman noticed a hungry boy seeking shelter on the streets. He said “Pst. Child go to that house and say, ‘**John 3:16**’” Even though the little boy did not know what **John 3:16** meant, he did as the watchman instructed.

The little boy went to the house and knocked on the door. He did not understand the strange words that fell from his lips “**John 3:16**,” but the lady smiled and invited him to come in out of the cold.

The boy thought, “I do not know what this **John 3:16** is, but it sure makes a cold Korean boy warm.” Seeing that the boy was gaunt with hunger, the kind lady brought him a bowl of hot soup. And as he ate, the boy thought again, “I do not know what this **John 3:16** is, but it sure makes a hungry Korean boy full.” After a nice bath and donning clean pajamas, he lay in a comfortable bed, tears flowing down his cheeks. I do not know what this **John 3:16** is,” he thought, “but it sure makes a strange lady love a lonely Korean boy.”

Without uttering a word of this passage, this lady’s kindness said it all. For God So Love The World That he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have ever lasting life. That is kindness Church Family, that is kindness.

Amen