

Silent Reflections

Tuesday 26th January 2021

The Power of Kindness



Introduction to the theme

2020 - the year of the global pandemic, was challenging for everyone in one way or another and people reacted in different ways to those challenges. There have been some amazing examples of altruism but also examples which have revealed the worst side of human interaction. From social media to in public, people have often been witnessed as being unkind, unloving and seemingly oblivious to the needs of others.

In a world which seems to promote revenge over reconciliation and personal gain above respecting others, Christians are called to be kind. Kindness is a biblical way of living and is described as a fruit of the Holy Spirit. As one contemporary Christian commentator has said: "We exhale kindness after we inhale what's been breathed into us by the Spirit. Kindness displays the wonder of Christ's love through us"

- **From Paul's letter to the Ephesians**

"Be kind to one another"

³² and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you

Ephesians 4:32 (NSRV)

- **From Paul's letter to the Galatians**

The Fruit of the Spirit

²² the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control.....

Galatians 5:22-23

After reading these two short biblical passages you may wish to use them in one or more of the following spiritual exercises:-

- You may wish to start by looking at the photograph on the cover page for a few moments. How does this image suggest kindness? What is involved ?

- One way of praying is to read the material very slowly and listen carefully and peacefully to the words and the feelings they evoke in you. Read or whisper the words in a rhythm with your breathing – a phrase at a time – with pauses and repetitions when and where you feel like it.

This reading or listening is different from the reading we are generally accustomed to, and you may find it referred to as *lectio divina*, literally sacred reading. This is reverential listening: listening both in a spirit of silence and of awe. We are listening for the still, small voice of the Spirit that will speak to us personally - not loudly, but intimately. We read slowly, attentively, gently listening to hear a word or phrase that is God's word for us today.

- Once you have found a word that speaks to you in a personal way, take it in and reflect on what God is showing you, or calling you to. Take in the word, memorise it - and while gently repeating it to yourself, allow it to interact with your thoughts, your hopes, your memories, your desires. In this way, you allow God's word to become a word that touches you and affects you at your deepest levels through the Spirit. If you still have your finger labyrinth from earlier this year you might like to use it at this point. The final stage is to rest in God's presence.

Here are some other thoughts to ponder.....

- **The Power of Kindness**

A poem by Mike Hall

Never underestimate the power of kindness....
the soothing words spoken over the phone
to the widow in tears who's now all alone

Never underestimate the power of prayer
the lifeline to God who hears every plea
the One who cured the leper and caused the blind man to see

Never underestimate the power of faith
the commitment to trust when life turns sour
the belief that He's with you in your darkest hour

Never underestimate the power of love
the visit to the parent who's growing out of touch
your arm around their shoulder that means so much

Never underestimate every kindness you show
God works through ordinary people....so his kingdom will grow

- Be kind and merciful. Let no one ever come to you without coming away better and happier. Be the living expression of God's kindness.

St Mother Teresa of Calcutta

- The first question which the priest and the Levite asked was: 'If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?' But... the good Samaritan reversed the question: 'If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?'

Dr Martin Luther King Jr

- ²⁴ .. I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,' declares the LORD

JEREMIAH 9:24

- Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up.

Proverbs 12:25

A Reflection

There are many different ways to demonstrate kindness, but listening and giving time to others is something we all have the resource to do. Take a moment to reflect and consider how you will allow kindness to shape you today as you are given opportunities to show people kindness

A Prayer

God, for the prayers of our hearts, spoken and unspoken, we come to you. Surround us with love. Fill us with compassion. Shower our world with patience and kindness in a most uncertain time.

