

Rev Rita Message Nov 14 2021

Once upon a time, as all good stories begin, a king's army was going back after a battle. Their food supplies got finished. The king asked his soldiers to go to a nearby village and get the grain. Some soldiers and their commander entered the village and met a farmer. The commander asked him, "Dear farmer, can you lead us to this village's largest field?" He took them to a large field. The commander ordered his soldiers, "Cut and collect all the grains." At this, the farmer got scared, He said, "Sir, come and I'll show you another field." The soldiers went with him to a small field. They collected the grains from that field. The commander asked the farmer why he led them to this field. The farmer replied, "That field belongs to someone else. How could I let you destroy it? This is my field and here I can allow you to do, what I wish." The king learnt of the farmer's kind concern for others and paid him handsomely for his grains.

When I think of kindness, one of the first names that come to mind is Mr. Rogers. Remember him? His children's tv show Mr. Roger's Neighborhood was watched by thousands, perhaps millions of children over its 33year life span.

It's a beautiful day in this neighborhood,
A beautiful day for a neighbor,
Would you be mine?
Could you be mine?

At the end of each episode, Fred sings "It's Such a Good Feeling" as he takes off a pair of blue sneakers, puts his dress shoes back on, then, takes off his cardigan zipper sweater, and hangs it up in the closet, and puts his coat back on,

It's such a good feeling to know you're alive.
It's such a happy feeling: You're growing inside.
And when you wake up ready to say,
"I think I'll make a snappy new day."
It's such a good feeling, a very good feeling,
The feeling you know that we're friends.

When the song finishes, he reminds the viewers before leaving his television studio house: "You always make each day a special day. You know how: By just being yourself. There's only one person in the (whole) world that's like you, and that's you. And people can like you just/exactly the way you are."

Mr. Rogers called Philadelphia home. Someone stole his car. The news media got a hold of the story and before long all the local TV stations were broadcasting the story. Thousands of Philadelphia citizens saw the story, including the thief who stole the car. This criminal had dealt with his own share of difficult times, but he knew that when he was small Mr. Rogers had been a positive influence on him. Within 48 hours the car was back in the spot where he left it, along with a note saying "if we'd known it was yours, we never would have taken it!"

Theologian William Barclay once said, "More people have been brought into the church by the kindness of real Christian love than by all the theological arguments in the world."

How many times in your life have you felt discouraged or felt like everything was against you only to be met by someone who was willing to show kindness to you and it made a positive difference for you.

Kindness is all about caring... being tenderhearted and compassionate toward others. The Bible again and again encourages us to make kindness our goal and habit. In this morning's scripture reading, Paul is writing to

a small church that is faced with great challenges. Instead of telling them to buck up and be better, he encourages them to focus on being thoughtful and helpful. In other words, to look for opportunities to offer kindness in the way that Jesus did.

In his book, *The Healing Power of Kindness*, Jean Maalouf writes that: "Kindness begets kindness and accomplishes what rigidity and toughness cannot accomplish. When we really believe this, it will happen. Jesus promised it when he said, "All things can be done for the one who believes" (Mark 9:23).

Kindness is the first of the three great treasures advocated by Lao Tzu. The Buddha taught that generosity is a primary quality of an awakened mind. Muhammad regarded kindness as an essential sign of faith. Jewish and Christian ethics are built upon deeds of kindness.

The spiritual practice of kindness encompasses a range of small acts and habits that we know as old-fashioned good manners — saying "please" and "thank you," waiting your turn, lending a helping hand, or cheering someone up with a smile. It applies not just to your relationships with other people. Etiquette in the spiritual life extends to things, animals, plants, and the Earth.

Sometimes we do things for people who can repay us in kind. Be nice to the boss to get a promotion. Buy a candy bar from the kid next door so their parents will buy popcorn the next time you are fundraising. Do childcare for a friend so they will babysit for you. The teaching of Jesus invites us to live a life that is based on more than just bartering. Following the way of Jesus means being generous with our presence, our time, and our money giving freely without expecting anything in return.

When we allow the Spirit to fill our lives, our kindness will change lives even when we don't feel quite as snappy as Mr. Rogers.

Thanks be to God. Amen.