

Trinity 6 (2026) (R)

All I really needed to know in life I learned in Vacation Bible School. An overstatement? Perhaps. Yet, there is truth here. Tiny seeds grow into mighty trees.

I remember, for example, a craft project when I was around five or six. Each student was given a strip of red-checkered oilcloth.

(If you are of a certain age, you may remember how oilcloth smelt. It did indeed have a unique odor.)

Well, for this craft project, the teacher helped us cut strips in the shape of gothic church windows.

We then pasted onto them a Bible verse. The finished product was intended as bookmarks to be sent home for mother. My verse was: **“Be ye kind.”**

Or, if you want the whole verse: **“Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you”** (Ephesians 4:32).

I can still say this verse from memory, though I never set out to memorize it.

What a great lesson to be learned at an early age. What a great seed to be planted in a young mind.

If you pay any attention at all to the news, you know that there is a famine in the land of kindness. We need more of it. Kindness, after all, is the way of Jesus.

Think, for example, how gently He dealt with the woman caught in the act of adultery. Instead of condemning her, He placed her on a brand-new path and sent her off with words of encouragement and freedom: **Go and sin no more.**

A second example. Think how He dealt with Blind Bartimaeus. Seated alone on the roadside outside Jericho, Bartimaeus cried out to Jesus for help. Jesus did not turn a deaf ear to his cry. He took time to deal with his request. He showed kindness.

A still third example. Think about Jesus and the children. When some mothers brought them to Him, the disciples wanted to send them away, but Jesus stopped them. He made time for them, took them into His lap and blessed them.

If we knew nothing else of Jesus except His kindness, He would still command our honor and homage.

But we don't have to wait for the New Testament and Jesus to find kindness demonstrated in the Bible.

In today's Old Testament lesson, we find Jesus' most celebrated ancestor, great King David, demonstrating this same quality to a man who hardly seemed worthy of it. I am speaking of Shimei.

To better understand what is going on in this reading, we need to look back a few chapters.

Here we find David and those loyal to him fleeing Jerusalem. The reason for their hasty departure is a rebellion initiated by David's son Absalom.

It is a mournful sight, one of absolute humiliation. The great king walks barefooted out of his capital city.

To make matters worse, Shimei, whom I just mentioned, is standing on a hill shouting down curses and throwing rocks.

The reason for his rage was he was of the same tribe as Israel's first king, Saul, the tribe of Benjamin, and he, along with many of his brethren, thought David had stolen the throne. Of course, this was untrue. It was God who had taken it from Saul and given it to David.

Be that as it may, some of David's men wanted to take Shimei out that day, but David restrained them. He chose to exercise kindness in the face of unkindness.

By the time this morning's reading opens, Absalom's rebellion has been put down. The King is now coming home. Instead of laments, there are shouts of joy. But one thing is the same: here is this miserable fellow Shimei . . . this time not hurling stones but crying out for mercy.

How sincere Shimei's repentance is hard to say. He could have been speaking from the

heart, or he could have been just trying to save his neck. You decide.

Regardless, the king chooses not to pay back a bad turn with a bad turn. He grants Shimei clemency. A gracious move on his part.

Reading the Old Testament in light of the New . . . it is appropriate to view David's acts of kindness to Shimei as pointing forward to His greater Son, Jesus.

Jesus, you see, would do what his ancestor David did but more perfectly.

I say "more perfectly" because at the end of David's life, the king rescinded the clemency he granted to Shimei.

David's last words to his son Solomon, Israel's future king, were:

“His hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood” (1 Kings 2:9).

Now that does not sound very kind, does it?

But David’s greater son, Jesus, would exercise kindness all the way through to the end. Even as He hung on the cross, He extended mercy to the penitent thief . . . the same one who earlier had hurled insults in His face.

This man was Shimei come again. He cursed, then cried out for mercy. And Jesus gave it to him. **“Today, thou shalt be with me in paradise,”** Jesus told the penitent thief.

1 Peter 2:23 summarizes the way of Jesus like this: **“When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.”**

So, what David did imperfectly – showed kindness – Jesus did perfectly.

And this is where I am going with all this . . . In the New Testament, this same virtue is enjoined on all Jesus' followers: "Be ye kind."

But what might this kindness look like on the ground, in your home, neighborhood, sphere of influence?

Allow me to call to your attention some principles in the Bible that might help us carry out this command . . . this command to be kind.

The first is: **We all stand in need of God's kindness.** In a sense we are all Shimei-s, rebels against the Lord's Anointed and ultimately against God Himself.

Paul tells us as much in Romans 5:10: "**For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more,**

being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.”

The good news, as this verse tells us, God has met our rebellion with kindness. Again to quote Paul: **“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”** (Romans 5:8).

It works like this: The kindness we have received at God’s hand compels us to extend this same quality to our fellow human beings.

“If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another,” says 1 John 4:11.

God’s kindness to us is where it all begins.

What about you? What about me? Are we actively cultivating this virtue of kindness in our lives? Which brings me to my second principle: **Failure to do so, blocks our ability to receive divine blessings.**

We find this principle enunciated in Jesus' words in Matthew 6:15: **“If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”**

But how does this work?

An illustration I find helpful involves the mechanism of breathing:

You can't breathe in fresh air until you breathe out stale air.

The same seems to be true when it comes to receiving the blessings God wants to give us.

We must ‘breathe out’ unkindness and unforgiveness in order to breathe in mercy and pardon.

What are some things in your life that are preventing the new air of the Spirit from coming

in? Identify those things, so you can ‘breathe’ them out. Get rid of them.

The **third principle** is an obvious one:

Kindness (including forgiveness and mercy) is not something we do under our own steam.

No, we need the help of the Holy Spirit.

Back in 2015, a tragic thing happened. Nine members of a black church in Charleston, S.C., were gunned down during a mid-week prayer meeting.

A few days later, family members of the slain stood before an inter-active television and looked the perpetrator in the eye and said: “I forgive you.”

I’m not sure I could have done what they did. Could you?

There is only one way those dear saints of God were able to extend mercy: it was through the extraordinary power of the Holy Spirit.

And what a powerful message they sent out. It baffled the secular world. The kindness David showed to Shimei and which Jesus extended to the thief on the cross won the day. ///

Allow me to close with this thought:

You may not be able to give huge sums of money to the work of the kingdom.

You may not be able to preach a Gospel sermon that will reach thousands.

But you can, with the help of the Holy Spirit, be kind. //// And, in the end, that may well be the most powerful witness anyone can give to Jesus Christ.