

2024 11 03/ Luke 6:32-36
Rev Dr. Hae-Jeong Yoon

Kindness

When we think of God, we are quick to think of his omnipotence, and his omniscience. But those near him knew and know that God comes cloaked in kindness, or loving compassion. The Hebrew word for kindness is, *hesed*. It appears 250 times in the Old Testament, pointing to its critical importance for the Bible and the Jewish faith. **Hesed conveys a sense of love, loyalty, and kindness that inspires compassionate behavior.** It is one of the most fundamental characteristics of God, and it reflects of His covenantal nature toward humans, which expresses eternal love or eternal kindness toward them.

In the Old Testament, especially Psalm 136, celebrates the loving kindness of God. The psalmist sees this loving kindness through nature. Nature is sealed by God's loving kindness and God's wisdom. We stand in awe of God's great wisdom that fills the macro universe and micro creations. The sun and the moon! The great lights that God placed in the sky to brighten the day, along with the moon and stars that guard the night. God is glorious and stirs our hearts to praise! Birds of the air and fish in the water! They are sustained by the loving kindness of God. God's creation inspires our hearts to praise. Among the many beautiful things God created, God chose us to be His greatest treasure. God chose us as His very own temple of His holy presence. This loving kindness truly endures really, forever! The infinite God desires to be one with you! God's humble heart and loving kindness! They are unfathomable!

Nehemiah said, "You are God, ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abundant in kindness." (Neh 9:19) David agrees, "Your loving kindness is better than life." (Ps 63:3)

In the New Testament, we also read about Jesus' loving kindness to people. I want to present a couple of examples regarding Jesus' compassion.

Let's hear the story of Zacchaeus: "I am a person who has money but not friends. I built this big house on the edge of town, but no one ever came to see me. I can't say I blamed them. I paid for the place with money that I cheated from their taxes. No, no one ever visited me until the day Jesus came. 'I am coming to your house today,' he announced, right there in the middle of town where all could hear. He didn't have to do that. The restaurant was down the block, or I would have bought him lunch at some nice restaurant. But no, he wanted to come to my house, and he wanted everyone to know where he was going. His is the first signature in my guest book. That was kind of him, right? Unbelievably kind. I looked into his eyes. He looked at me. I felt wrapped by his loving kindness. He never blamed me for what I did." And Jesus' kindness changed Zacchaeus.

Another story of a woman. She said, "I've been sick for a dozen years. It was a long time. I ran out of doctors, money, even hope. Worst of all, I had run out of friends. Loneliness was another pain that pierced my heart. I hadn't been home in years. I had been living in a shelter. But then Jesus came to town. He was on his way to heal Jairus' daughter, who was dying. The crowd was thick, and people were pushing, but I was desperate. I pressed my arm through the mob and reached for the hem of his jacket. Not to grab, just to touch it. When I did, my body changed. Instantly. My face rushed with warmth. I could breathe deeply. My back seemed to straighten. I stopped. He stopped too. He asked, "Who touched me?" He asked again. As he and the crowd waited, my heart pounded. He asked again, "Who touched me?" He didn't sound angry, just curious. I stepped forward, and I told the whole story. People were pressing, disciples were questioning. But Jesus was listening. Listening to the whole story. He didn't have to. The healing would have been enough. But that was not enough for him. Jesus wanted to do more than heal my body. He wanted to hear my story all. What a kind thing to do! The miracle restored my health; the kindness restored my dignity. And he called me "daughter." "Daughter, be of good cheer. Your faith has made you well. Go in peace." I've been told he never used that word with anyone else, just me.

We read the perfect dose of kindness of God to transform, and to restore, to heal the person whoever in front of Jesus. Jesus' invitation in **Matt 11:28-30** also offers us the kindness of heaven. **"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."**

Farmers in ancient Israel used to train in inexperienced ox by yoking it to an experienced one with a wooden harness. The mature one and younger one yoked together. The straps around the older animal were tightly drawn. The mature one carried the load, but the yoke around the younger animal was loose. He walked alongside the more mature ox. The weight was on mature ox. We walk together with Jesus, but weight of life is mainly on Jesus. He is kind and loving. His heart is filled with grace. He invites us to His rest of God.

We cannot fathom Jesus' love on the cross. He removed the pressing weight of sin from our hearts. When we meditate on and ponder God's kindness, our hearts become increasingly rooted in his love. Our job as the beloved of God is to receive his agape love deeply. We should not dwell too much on our mistakes. God understands our humanity. With gratitude, we can continue our walk with God into the future since Jesus has already covered our mistakes with his righteousness.

When our hearts become filled more and more with his love, it naturally removes all the dark corners of our soul and hearts. **Our job as humans is to drink his kindness again and again. It is to take root deeply in his love.** It will overflow toward others. Then, we will have wisdom to deal with others naturally because HS will put words into our mouths! It is the promise of God for this.

In **Colossians 4:6**, Paul says, **"Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person."** That is a promise of God written in the Bible. The phrase seasoned with salt means seasoned with loving kindness. Then, the Holy Spirit takes over the situation, and the Holy Spirit gives you words to speak. Whoever you meet, you will feel protected. There will be no fear, worry, tension, or anxiety. Find a kind and loving heart toward the person. God will take over your mouth, words and situation.

How kind are you? What is your kindness quotient? How loving and compassionate are you? When was the last time you did something kind for someone in your family? School and workplace. Which person is the most overlooked or avoided? Kind hearts are quietly kind. They don't brag their kindness. Their kind heart brings people to God and change of lives.

There is a scripture about the kindness of hearts that I want to share with you. It is **Romans 12:20: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing so, you will heap burning coals on his head."** This scripture relates to the ancient metal refining method. In ancient times, people placed burning coals into the smelting furnace, added raw metal, placed another layer of coals, added raw metal again, and then added another layer of coals. The hot temperature of the burning coals refines the raw metal inside. It purifies. The meaning of "Heap burning coals on his head" means that your kind actions will change people's hearts into good, pure hearts.

God is in charge of history and of human lives. But we need to do our part as co-workers of God to change people and the world. It is to live in kindness. It is also to choose the life of truth." We feel the tension in the air because of the election. We should be kind to whoever is standing or sitting in front of us. We should be kind to ourselves. We should be kind to our enemies. We can be kind and disagree with our friends or family. We can use the power of kindness with whoever is in front of us. It will bring us together. It will bring us peace in the air! It needs to start with ourselves.