Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church  
Knoxville, Tennessee  
July 29, 2018  
Dr. Steven P. Eason

The Fruit of the Spirit: "Kindness"  
Galatians 5:22-23

We are in a summer sermon series based on Paul’s “fruit of the Spirit” found in Galatians 5:22-23. Today we come to the fruit of kindness.

By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things.

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There are some big issues in this world. You would think the Church would have more to offer than kindness. Seems fluffy! But is it?

How desperately does the world need the fruit of kindness?

• senseless mass shootings  
• bullying  
• road rage  
• abuse  
• the lack of civility  
• hate crimes  
• terrorism  
• discrimination

I can keep going. Paul didn’t just throw a list of fruit, or characteristics of God, together on the back of a napkin while waiting in the airport. He hand-picked these fruit, because they each tell us something unique about the character and the nature of God. Kindness. We desperately need some kindness.

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Imagine how the word kindness sounded to the all-powerful Roman Empire. Weak, soft, open to defeat. Rome was about strength and power, intimidation and
control. If the Church was going to compete with Rome, it would need to put up something more powerful than *kindness*.

Or would it? Perhaps that is precisely the point. *Kindness* is counter-cultural to Rome. *Kindness* is counter-cultural to all arrogant, self-serving, power. We saw kindness in Christ, who touched the lepers, cared for the poor, embraced societies’ outcast, washed his disciple’s feet and ate and drank with sinners. That’s *kindness*!

To live in Christian community is to be counter-cultural. And think of this, the Church is still around, and Rome fell. Do the math! *Kindness* is on this list for a reason.

*There’s actually a lot of *kindness* in this world. Several months ago, I was on my way home from teaching a seminar in Atlanta and stopped for gas along the way. I went in for coffee and witnessed something significant. An elderly white gentleman was entering the convenience store at the same time an elderly black woman was coming out. He quickly stepped to the side and held the door open for her.*

As she passed, she politely said, “*Thank you, sir.*” to which he replied, “*You are most certainly welcome. Have a wonderful afternoon.*”

Not a big deal? We were in Georgia. Not too long ago, people were killing each other over the issue of slavery. The generation in which they grew up was segregated and for the most part, full of racial prejudice. But they were *kind* to each other, respectful, honoring each other in that brief moment in the doorway of a convenience store. It wasn’t earth-shattering, but it was counter-cultural. I was watching *kindness* change the world.

You can see the fruit of *kindness* in the most routine places in life. Nurses, teachers, salespeople, mechanics, carpenters, artists, musicians, lawyers, doctors, bankers...people who are homeless, rich people, poor people all share multiple acts of *kindness* every day. I would venture to say there is more *kindness* in the world than there is evil, but evil makes the news.

*Several years ago, we were up at Lake Michigan and went out for breakfast with friends. The small restaurant was packed, so we stood in line to wait. A young couple was in front of us. A table for four came open and they looked back at us and said to the waitress, “*Let them have that table. We’ll wait.*” But that’s not the end of story.*

We could see them from our table and noticed they waited for a long time. So, we called the waitress over and asked her to put their breakfast on our tab. We left before they found out we did it. Their *kindness* inspired our *kindness*! It’s contagious.

A small thing, given the enormity of the issues in our world today, but it’s the small things that have the power to change the big things! There are hundreds of
thousands, even millions of acts of kindness rendered in our world every day. They don’t make the news, they just make the difference.

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You’ve heard the phrase, “Kill them with kindness.” It likely originated from an English proverb, “The ape kills her young with kindness.” The ape would accidentally kill its young by crushing it with an affectionate hug. That certainly does not mean we should hurt someone. It does say that we can kill the animosity with kindness. You crush it!

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Heaping burning coals on your enemy’s head wouldn’t make sense if you are feeding them and taking care of their needs. That’d be counter-productive! It likely meant putting hot coals in a pan they carried on their head to replenish their fire and gain warmth in their homes. You win them over with kindness.

Not as easy as it sounds. How does kindness get through prejudice and hate? But it does. How does kindness get through arrogance and pride? But it does. How does kindness get through to a hard heart, a broken past, and a closed mind? But it does.

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We’ve tried everything else.

• At times, physical force seems necessary, but if force could overcome evil, we would have already done it.
• If being intelligent could overcome evil, why hasn’t it worked? Some of the most intelligent people in the world today are actually the ones committing the evil deeds.
• Technology has given us many things, but it has not defeated evil. In fact, at times, technology actually facilitates and even fuels evil. The internet is used for both good and evil.
• Business, medicine, the arts, and science cannot overcome evil. It’s not their task. It’s not within their expertise. It’s not their purpose.

Kindness. Seems such a fluffy concept, but in actuality, it has the power to paralyze evil. It can disarm even the most barbaric criminal, or the most crusty of individuals. It can cancel the plans of revenge. Kindness can dispel hate. It can even turn an enemy into an ally.
Evil makes the news, but kindness changes the world. It’s a powerful weapon for good.

We can try to control guns. Control the heart and you control the gun. A heart full of God’s kindness doesn’t need a gun to do harm to others.

The kindness of God stands with the oppressed; is an advocate for the poor, guards the rights of the defenseless, and values all human life. Kindness will go to prison, a crack house, the White House, or to people with no house. It’s blind to money or power. It doesn’t care about color, nationality, education, or religion, or lack thereof.

It’s indiscriminate. The waitress at your table is as important as all the people sitting at that table with you. That’s the kindness of God.

Kindness opens doors, shares words of respect, offers a breakfast table, or pays for a meal. All simple acts of kindness that overcome evil with good, one small deed at a time. Every act of kindness reclaims a world that belongs to God.

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Let us pray;

Cleanse our hearts, O God, from all malice, hate and pride. Grow within us this fruit of kindness, that the world may see another way; a way that leads to life.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Congregation:

Amen.
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The Fruit of the Spirit: "Kindness"
Galatians 5:22-23

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How desperately does the world need the fruit of kindness?

- senseless mass shootings
- bullying
- road rage
- abuse
- the lack of civility
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How desperately does the world need the fruit of kindness?

• senseless mass shootings
• bullying
• road rage
• abuse
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The Fruit of the Spirit: "Kindness"
Galatians 5:22-23

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- senseless mass shootings
- bullying
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- abuse
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- bullying
- road rage
- abuse
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Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church  
Knoxville, Tennessee  
July 29, 2018  
Dr. Steven P. Eason

The Fruit of the Spirit: "Kindness"  
Galatians 5:22-23

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There are some big issues in this world. You would think the Church would have more to offer than kindness. Seems fluffy! But is it?

How desperately does the world need the fruit of kindness?

• senseless mass shootings
• bullying
• road rage
• abuse
• the lack of civility
• hate crimes
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• discrimination

I can keep going. Paul didn’t just throw a list of fruit, or characteristics of God, together on the back of a napkin while waiting in the airport. He hand-picked these fruit, because they each tell us something unique about the character and the nature of God. Kindness. We desperately need some kindness.

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Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
July 29, 2018
Dr. Steven P. Eason

The Fruit of the Spirit: "Kindness"
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The Fruit of the Spirit: "Kindness"
Galatians 5:22-23

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*By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things.*

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But is it?

How desperately does the world need the fruit of kindness?

- senseless mass shootings
- bullying
- road rage
- abuse
- the lack of civility
- hate crimes
- terrorism
- discrimination

I can keep going. Paul didn’t just throw a list of fruit, or characteristics of God, together on the back of a napkin while waiting in the airport. He hand-picked these fruit, because they each tell us something unique about the character and the nature of God. Kindness. We desperately need some kindness.

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- bullying
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The Fruit of the Spirit: "Kindness"
Galatians 5:22-23

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How desperately does the world need the fruit of kindness?

- senseless mass shootings
- bullying
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- abuse
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How desperately does the world need the fruit of kindness?

- senseless mass shootings
- bullying
- road rage
- abuse
- the lack of civility
- hate crimes
- terrorism
- discrimination

I can keep going. Paul didn’t just throw a list of fruit, or characteristics of God, together on the back of a napkin while waiting in the airport. He hand-picked these fruit, because they each tell us something unique about the character and the nature of God. Kindness. We desperately need some kindness.

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> In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Congregation:

**Amen.**
We are in a summer sermon series based on Paul’s “fruit of the Spirit” found in Galatians 5:22-23. Today we come to the fruit of kindness.

By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things.

*  

There are some big issues in this world. You would think the Church would have more to offer than kindness. Seems fluffy! But is it?

How desperately does the world need the fruit of kindness?

- senseless mass shootings
- bullying
- road rage
- abuse
- the lack of civility
- hate crimes
- terrorism
- discrimination

I can keep going. Paul didn’t just throw a list of fruit, or characteristics of God, together on the back of a napkin while waiting in the airport. He hand-picked these fruit, because they each tell us something unique about the character and the nature of God. Kindness. We desperately need some kindness.

*  

Imagine how the word kindness sounded to the all-powerful Roman Empire. Weak, soft, open to defeat. Rome was about strength and power, intimidation and
control. If the Church was going to compete with Rome, it would need to put up something more powerful than kindness.

Or would it? Perhaps that is precisely the point. Kindness is counter-cultural to Rome. Kindness is counter-cultural to all arrogant, self-serving, power. We saw kindness in Christ, who touched the lepers, cared for the poor, embraced societies’ outcast, washed his disciple’s feet and ate and drank with sinners. That’s kindness!

To live in Christian community is to be counter-cultural. And think of this, the Church is still around, and Rome fell. Do the math! Kindness is on this list for a reason.

There’s actually a lot of kindness in this world. Several months ago, I was on my way home from teaching a seminar in Atlanta and stopped for gas along the way. I went in for coffee and witnessed something significant. An elderly white gentleman was entering the convenience store at the same time an elderly black woman was coming out. He quickly stepped to the side and held the door open for her.

As she passed, she politely said, “Thank you, sir.” to which he replied, “You are most certainly welcome. Have a wonderful afternoon.”

Not a big deal? We were in Georgia. Not too long ago, people were killing each other over the issue of slavery. The generation in which they grew up was segregated and for the most part, full of racial prejudice. But they were kind to each other, respectful, honoring each other in that brief moment in the doorway of a convenience store. It wasn’t earth-shattering, but it was counter-cultural. I was watching kindness change the world.

You can see the fruit of kindness in the most routine places in life. Nurses, teachers, salespeople, mechanics, carpenters, artists, musicians, lawyers, doctors, bankers...people who are homeless, rich people, poor people all share multiple acts of kindness every day. I would venture to say there is more kindness in the world than there is evil, but evil makes the news.

Several years ago, we were up at Lake Michigan and went out for breakfast with friends. The small restaurant was packed, so we stood in line to wait. A young couple was in front of us. A table for four came open and they looked back at us and said to the waitress, “Let them have that table. We’ll wait.” But that’s not the end of story.

We could see them from our table and noticed they waited for a long time. So, we called the waitress over and asked her to put their breakfast on our tab. We left before they found out we did it. Their kindness inspired our kindness! It’s contagious.

A small thing, given the enormity of the issues in our world today, but it’s the small things that have the power to change the big things! There are hundreds of
thousands, even millions of acts of kindness rendered in our world every day. They
don’t make the news, they just make the difference.

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You’ve heard the phrase, “Kill them with kindness.” It likely originated from an
English proverb, “The ape kills her young with kindness.” The ape would accidentally kill
its young by crushing it with an affectionate hug. That certainly does not mean we
should hurt someone. It does say that we can kill the animosity with kindness. You

Paul quoted verses from Proverbs 25:21-22 to the Christians in Rome;
If your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink;
for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads. (Romans 12:20).

Heaping burning coals on your enemy’s head wouldn’t make sense if you are
feeding them and taking care of their needs. That’d be counter-productive! It likely
meant putting hot coals in a pan they carried on their head to replenish their fire and
gain warmth in their homes. You win them over with kindness.

Not as easy as it sounds. How does kindness get through prejudice and hate? But
it does. How does kindness get through arrogance and pride? But it does. How does
kindness get through to a hard heart, a broken past, and a closed mind? But it does.

*  
We’ve tried everything else.

- At times, physical force seems necessary, but if force could overcome evil,
  we would have already done it.
- If being intelligent could overcome evil, why hasn’t it worked? Some of
  the most intelligent people in the world today are actually the ones
  committing the evil deeds.
- Technology has given us many things, but it has not defeated evil. In fact,
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- Business, medicine, the arts, and science cannot overcome evil. It’s not their
  task. It’s not within their expertise. It’s not their purpose.

Kindness. Seems such a fluffy concept, but in actuality, it has the power to
paralyze evil. It can disarm even the most barbaric criminal, or the most crusty of
individuals. It can cancel the plans of revenge. Kindness can dispel hate. It can even
turn an enemy into an ally.
Evil makes the news, but kindness changes the world. It’s a powerful weapon for good.

We can try to control guns. Control the heart and you control the gun. A heart full of God’s kindness doesn’t need a gun to do harm to others.

The kindness of God stands with the oppressed; is an advocate for the poor, guards the rights of the defenseless, and values all human life. Kindness will go to prison, a crack house, the White House, or to people with no house. It’s blind to money or power. It doesn’t care about color, nationality, education, or religion, or lack thereof.

It’s indiscriminate. The waitress at your table is as important as all the people sitting at that table with you. That’s the kindness of God.

Kindness opens doors, shares words of respect, offers a breakfast table, or pays for a meal. All simple acts of kindness that overcome evil with good, one small deed at a time. Every act of kindness reclaims a world that belongs to God.

Oh, I think Paul knew exactly what he was doing when he carefully selected the word “kindness” as one of the nine fruit of the Spirit. The kindness of God dwells within us. In kindness, God created the heavens and the earth, gave us life, forgives our sins and grants us the gift of eternal life. What greater kindness is there than this? We know this kindness and saw this kindness in Christ. We are called to bear witness to this kindness in the world, especially now.

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