

Moravian Women's Association- Devotional Paper – October 2023

Fruits of the Spirit

*But the Spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, **kindness**, goodness, faithfulness, humility and self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23a GNB)*

Do you believe that most people are kind? In his book, "Humankind – a Hopeful History" – Rutger Bregman states that research demonstrates that most people don't believe that people are kind. However, research also indicates that this belief is incorrect – studies show that on the whole "most people, deep down, are pretty decent." (Bregman).

My family experienced the kindness of people recently. My 86-year-old dad collapsed in the centre of Manchester one busy Friday morning. On his way down, he hit his head on a bench which caused bleeding and bruising. People rushed to help. Dad was able to tell them that mum was in M and S having a coffee. Someone hurried to M and S and found her. By the time she reached dad, an ambulance was on its way and a young man was kneeling on the floor with dad's head on his lap. A member of staff from a nearby shop put mum's perishable food in their fridge, took mum's address and offered to bring it to her when she finished work. The young man helped mum towards the ambulance which was going to take dad to hospital. The kindness of strangers was amply demonstrated that morning.

For us as Christians, kindness is a calling. Paul lists it as one of the fruits of the Spirit. The Greek word used by Paul for kindness is *chrestotes*, this translates as divine kindness. We should be kind because God is kind, our kind acts should reflect the kind acts of God. God's acts of kindness are universal; that is, they are extended to all people both good and bad. God expects nothing in return from us – He just keeps on acting kindly. **Read Luke 6: 27-36.**

Genesis 1 describes how God created the world and all that lives on it. Verse 27 describes how humans were created in the image of God. Isn't that amazing? That all of us sitting in our MWA Circles have something of the image of God within us. But it doesn't end there – every human on this planet (whether we like it or not) has something of the image of God within them.

Jesus' earthly ministry is full of examples of how he recognised the divine image in all – he acknowledged and mixed with all sorts of people who were considered insignificant or outsiders in his day – women, children, non-Jews, tax collectors, lepers etc. We are called to do the same – every person we meet bears something of the image of God. There is a lovely Celtic prayer that asks for God's help in this matter – "May we see the face of Christ in everyone we meet. May everyone we meet see the face of Christ in us."

In her book, "An Altar in the World," Barbara Brown Taylor, an Anglican priest in the USA invites Christians to find the sacred in every day in a multitude of ways. One chapter devotes itself to the practice of encountering others. In other words, carrying out acts of kindness to the people we meet in order that we may meet God. She states that carrying out these acts can both transform others but also transform ourselves. By being kind, we become more kind – we develop kindness as a fruit of the Spirit.

To Discuss

1. Can you think of a time when someone was kind to you? – How did that make you feel?
2. Who do you consider to be kind?

3. George Fox (founder of the Quakers) wrote this “Walk joyfully on the earth and respond to that of God in every human being” – are there sections of society - homeless, addicts, refugees for example – that you find it difficult to respond to?

To take home or use during the meeting

Perhaps you could pray the prayer - “May we see the face of Christ in everyone we meet. May everyone we meet see the face of Christ in us.”