

Who is my Neighbour?

Annie

Scriptures:

Luke 6:32-36

Colossians 3: 12-13

Galatians 5:22-23

Luke 10:25-37

Psalm 18:19

"Just because an animal is large, it doesn't mean he doesn't want kindness; however big Tigger seems to be, remember that he wants as much kindness as Roo."
— A.A. Milne, **Winnie-the-Pooh**

Wouldn't it be wonderful if 2020 was remembered, not as the year of the Global Pandemic, but as the year when humanity remembered how important showing kindness to one another is?

Jesus not only tells us, He also demonstrates just how much value God places on kindness, how precious it is to Him. He calls God kind. Kindness is one segment of the Fruit of Holy Spirit, an intrinsic part of the character and nature of our God. Yet, it has taken something as traumatic and far reaching as this worldwide plague for us to even begin to remember the difference that one simple act of kindness can make in someone's life.

One of the few possessions of mine that has survived all the moves we have made over the years, is a Children's Bible my parents gave me when I was 4 years old. It has full page illustrations with each of the Bible stories, not what would be considered appropriate for a children's book these days, but beautiful oil painting type illustrations. One that I would look at time and again was the parable of the Good Samaritan, it imprinted itself upon me as a permanent reminder of Christ's words.

Jesus told us to love our neighbour as ourselves and used that parable to reveal what true kindness means. It means laying aside "us", our opinions, our prejudices (however much we deny they exist, we all have them), our cultural or national identity, and taking on the burden Christ has given us.

It's easy to be deceived into thinking that following Christ has no burdens, that He has taken them all away. This teaching is simply not true. Christ told us to carry His burden, to take up our cross daily and follow Him. This means bearing fruit, the Fruit of Holy Spirit revealed in us for the whole world to see, that will draw others to asking what makes us different. Our heaviest burden is accepting that we need God in every facet of life's journey, the good times and the bad. When we can shoulder that burden by rejoicing in God at all times, the heaviness lifts, the weariness leaves and we can live an abundant joy filled life.

New Zealand moved out of total lockdown almost 2 months ago. The only Covid cases that we have are now NZ residents returning home from overseas. Sadly, some Kiwis have already forgotten how to be kind, to show compassion to these home comers as they go through mandatory isolation and testing before they can be allowed into the community.

Without God, the heart of man is without doubt evil. It is only and ever by the power of God that we can put aside our stony hearted nature and truly bear fruit. It is only by accepting that, no matter how it may seem on the surface, humanity without God will always be lacking true kindness, the Kindness that can only come from God Himself.

Prayer: Abba Father, imprint upon all of us the words of Christ to love our neighbour as ourselves, to extend the hand of kindness to one and all, in Jesus' precious name we pray, Amen

