

*Lord, make these words Your Word, that our hearts may become Your heart. Amen.*

Today we continue our series in this pre-election season – the BE Campaign. Last week it was “BE Just.” Next week it’s “BE Humble.” Today – BE Kind.

On the face of it, the command to “Be Kind” sounds a little kindergarten-y,

“Be Kind, Rewind,” as they used to say in the day of VHS video rentals.

But what the prophet Micah said was “Love kindness.”

“Love kindness” –that’s more robust than “Be Kind.”

“Love kindness” means we’re not gritting our teeth, doing the right thing – it means we’re doing what we love.

We get so we love to be kind to people, because we see the effect it has on them.

When someone receives kindness, it opens up their spirit,

the same way unkindness can shut a person’s spirit down.

What would it mean to become a community of people who truly love kindness?

To go out next week in our Family Fun Fest after church and say,

“We love kindness. We can’t wait to be kind to the people who visit us.”

What an impact this community could have.

Was Jesus being kind when he stopped and healed those lepers?

He could have kept walking, as I’m sure many people did – lepers were

considered highly contagious and had to keep apart from the population.

These men may have been disfigured, missing limbs or noses, which can happen.

And the one who returned to give thanks was also a Samaritan –

Jews in Jesus’ time definitely stayed away from those folks.

Yet Jesus didn’t hesitate when they called out to him.

Maybe for us, if you’re on the more progressive end of the social-political spectrum,

It might be like being asked to help a person wearing a MAGA hat; or,

if you lean toward MAGA hats, helping someone wearing a Gay Pride t-shirt.

When we love kindness, we see the person, not the issues.

When we love kindness that matters more than the things that divide us.

Kindness matters more than being right, even being considered righteous.

Kindness impels us out of our comfort zones to reach across boundaries of

difference – and that’s often where we find God.

That’s often where we can form community.

This encounter takes place in an in-between land: *On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee.*

Galilee was Jesus' home territory – where he grew up, where stayed whenever he was not on the road.

And Samaria is where “those Samaritans” live, those “not-quite-Jews.”

Samaria was once part of Israel, the northern part. But by Jesus' time the estrangement was so complete, he refers to the Samaritan man as “this foreigner.” So Jesus was between Galilee, Home Base, and Samaria the land of the “Other.” The places between are often places where we find God.

As followers of Christ we are always, in a sense, on the way to Jerusalem, focused on God's mission of transforming the world.

We are also called walk in that in-between place,

between home-base and other-land. We can't be too rooted in home-base.

Most churches I know describe themselves with words like “family,” “community,” “warm,” “welcoming.” I'd like to hear us describe ourselves as “explorers,” “adventurers,” or “missionaries,” “bold,” “edgy,” “going to the margins.”

That that is where Jesus is calling us to be and where we become more like Jesus. And how do we get to be more like Jesus?

We can start by learning from this Samaritan leper, whose faith was so strong he called out to a Jewish healer for help; whose gratitude was so strong he delayed going home when he was healed to go back and worship Jesus.

Jesus gave this man a gift of eternal life. He turns to the man at his feet, and says to him, *“Rise and go your way. Your faith has made you well.”*

The word that is translated here as “made you well” can also be translated as “saved you.” In Greek, healing and salvation are the same word.

In this story, that particular word is only addressed to this one leper who returns. The other nine received a healing of the body, but salvation – wholeness of body, mind and spirit - is to be found in the One who is God.

In His salvation is healing – healing of the body and spirit, healing of the wounds of the heart, healing of social barriers and prejudice, healing from the fear.

And we can learn from our pets, who so often show kindness to us and to each other and who draw kindness out of us.

When faced with people we may not want to deal with or be kind to, what if we thought of our pets and how we'd treat them? Maybe we can do the same.

As the bumper sticker reads, “God, help me be the person my dog thinks I am.”

In a way, we enact this story every Sunday.  
Compared to God's holiness, we are as "unclean" as a leper.  
But Jesus has made us clean, worthy to stand before God.  
Our Lord has lifted us out of the dust, too.  
He says, "Come, enjoy the fullness of healing. Come, be in relationship with me."

And so we come here, we kneel. We say, "Lord, have mercy."  
We hear of God's great love for us and forgiveness.  
And then we say "thank you," exuberantly. The word eucharist means "Thanksgiving."  
We may not throw ourselves in the dust, but we kneel in our Episcopalian way.  
We receive Christ's life. And then we say thank you.  
And out we go, to extend that love and life to the strangers and outcasts we meet,  
because we have learned to love kindness, to love all sorts of people,  
as God has loved us. *Amen.*

### **Luke 17:11-19**

On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, they called out, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" When he saw them, he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were made clean. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus asked, "Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" Then he said to him, "Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well."