

KINDNESS / CHRESTOS

Gordon Tubbs

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If you're joining us for the first time today, or if you've been living under a rock - which during a pandemic is probably normal - my name is Gordon Tubbs and I'm the new associate pastor here for youth ministry. We are currently in a sermon series going over the Fruits of the Spirit, and I guess it was decided that KINDNESS was the hardest one to preach on, which is probably why it was given to me. But I digress.

Of the nine Fruits of the Spirit, KINDNESS sits right in the middle, so it might be appropriate to do a little refresher. As Christians we believe that the Trinity encompasses three distinct persons who united are God. And at risk of presenting an inaccurate analogy, we can think of the Trinity as we might a power trio rock band if you will. God the Father as the guitarist, God the Son as the vocalist and bass player, and God the Holy Spirit as the drummer.

When Jesus ascended into Heaven, the Holy Spirit descended upon us to be our Helper. Like a good drummer, the Holy Spirit keeps us in time by establishing the rhythmic foundation of the music. Because God is calling us to sing along with Him in the song of Creation, God wants us to jam with him. And so the more we press into God's presence, the more we can feel our lives being transformed by the rhythm of the Spirit - with the Fruit of the Spirit being evidence of that. Evidence of a life changed by a relationship with God.

And at first glance you might think kindness sits in a different category compared to the other fruits, because kindness is all about outward expression, of doing acts of service and so forth. But on closer inspection, *biblical kindness* has a different meaning.

As you may recall from Kyle's first sermon in this series, the word "love" has four different meanings in the Greek New Testament. Similarly when it comes to kindness, it doesn't have four different meanings, but it does have a different meaning than how we understand it in English. For instance, in English we often use the word "kind" to describe how something is classified or categorized, or as a synonym for charity or generosity. So one way to define kindness might be to treat someone else as though they are your own kind. And that's all well and good.

But, the Greek root for kindness is *CHRESTOS* which means serviceable, fit-for-use, good-for-something, and suitable. Some everyday examples of this include getting measured for a tailored suit or dress, or putting on personal protective equipment at work. But an even better example I think is simply the humble roll of duct tape. This stuff is good for a lot of things. It was invented by a war mom in 1942, who wrote a letter to FDR with a diagram and explanation of its use, and next thing we knew the President sent it to the War Production Board and the rest is history. Since then it has been used on everything, everywhere, even on the Lunar rover of the Apollo 17 mission! The *CHRESTOS* factor is off the charts.

But wait, there's more! When I was doing my reading in preparation for this sermon, I discovered that *CHRESTOS* shows up in some surprising places. The most interesting place is in Matthew 11:28-30, where Jesus says *"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."*

CHRESTOS is used at the end there in place of "easy" to describe the yoke of Jesus. Isn't that interesting? Based on that we might retranslate that last line to read "For my yoke is like duct tape and my burden is light." So next time you read that passage you can just picture yourself being joined at the hip to Jesus with a roll of duct tape.

But honestly that passage makes a whole lot more sense now, because if you're a mature Christian then you know your walk with Christ has had plenty of ups and downs. It's been anything but easy. But it has been *suitable and sufficient* to transform you.

So basically, if you're bearing the spiritual fruit of CHRESTOS, then you need to be like duct tape. You need to find a place where you fit in, where you can be good-for-something, where your service to the Kingdom fills a gap, where God can use you like he made you. If you're not sure you're bearing this fruit, or want to work with the Spirit to cultivate it more in your life, then I'll give you two indicators that might help.

The first way is this: be more intentional. Act like you mean it.

There was a movie that came out last year called Bohemian Rhapsody, that was about the band Queen and their rise to fame. Anyway, there was a scene in that movie where the band is in the recording studio and Brian May is laying down a lead guitar line, but he doesn't quite nail it. And Freddy Mercury chastises him and says "come on Brian, play it like you wrote it." In other words: Brian May was just improvising, he wasn't being intentional.

Here's another example: No doubt you've probably heard of the "pay it forward" phenomenon where somebody at a fast food restaurant pays for the meal of the person behind them. And those are nice things to do and all, but they can't bring about lasting transformation. On the other hand, intentional acts of kindness involve that personal touch and are focused on building a relationship. They are done for a purpose.

The second way is this: be more flexible.

In the military there is a phrase that we use to express this called Semper Gumby, or "always flexible." Recently we had a couple people in this congregation put on the uniform for reserve duty, and I'm sure their

flexibility is what allowed the mission to get accomplished. Bearing the fruit of CHRESTOS acknowledges the fact that when you report for duty, it's not going to be on your terms. You're going to get inconvenienced, but you're also going to be right where you're needed.

Our scripture reading today provides another example of this. In the Parable of the Good Samaritan, the traveler who is lying on the side of the road got passed by two people who couldn't have been bothered to help him out. The first person to pass was the priest, and we might say that being a priest and all, he was on his way to the Temple and didn't want to become unclean by interacting with the traveler. The second guy was a Levite, and Levites provided all the manpower for the priests, so his excuse is that he was literally running late for work. Neither of them could have been bothered to help a brother out.

The Samaritan on the other hand embraced the inconvenience of having to stop everything he was doing to tend to the traveler. He went out of his way to get him help, not simply to pass him off to somebody else and forget about him, but to make sure he was going to be ok by paying his bill with the innkeeper. That my friends is some real CHRESTOS, because the Samaritan was both intentional and flexible.

But believe it or not there is an even greater example of CHRESTOS, somebody who puts the Samaritan to shame. And that is our LORD and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Prior to the Incarnation, I can imagine a conversation between Jesus and the angels, with the angels saying "Hey Jesus, are you sure you want to go down there?" And then Jesus would say, "*you bet.*" And maybe the angels would keep pressing him, "yeah, but as one of them? As a human? That's gonna be really inconvenient for you boss. You're going to have to be a baby for a while, and learn to walk instead of fly around. Are you sure that's

what you want to do?" And then Jesus would say, *"of course. I love them. They need me, and so that's what I need to do."*

When the Word became flesh, CHRESTOS became flesh too. Being human was an inconvenience for Jesus, but it made things very convenient for us. His intention was to show us a new way of living life, a life full of love, joy, peace, patience, CHRESTOS, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. And when Jesus was hung on the cross, he wasn't improvising, he meant it. He wasn't paying it forward, he was paying it down. His sacrifice was the essence of CHRESTOS, because it was sufficient for all.

And so if you want to experience that kind of CHRESTOS in your life, then call upon the Lord, and ask the Holy Spirit to bring it. Allow yourself to be inconvenienced by the will of God for a while, see what happens.

Closing Prayer (transcription):

Heavenly Father I thank you so much for giving us little things in life such as duct tape that can remind us of your Word, remind us of what Your Spirit has given us. So Lord, my prayer for us today, is that you would pour Your Spirit onto our lives, onto our relationships. Help us be just like duct tape, help us be bound to the people we love, help us fill a duct where we see a duct, help us be serviceable good-for-something people, help us be sticky to one another. Lord I ask all these things in your precious and holy name, Amen.