



Theme: B.L.E.S.S.- Loving Others to Change the World **“Blessed Kindness”**



Weekly Memory Verse:

**⁸ God has told you, O mortal, what is good,
and what does the Lord require of you
but to do justice and to love kindness
and to walk humbly with your God?**

– Micah 6:8 (NRSV)

*For this series of sermons, we invite you to read the book, **B.L.E.S.S. – 5 Everyday Practices to Love Your Neighbor and Change the World** by Dave and Jon Ferguson. We encourage you to pick up a copy, or download one, and **read chapter 9 this week**. The readings below will complement this chapter, focusing on the moments when Jesus invited others to his table.*

Monday, November 14 – Read **Micah 6:6-8**. The prophet Micah defied the kingdom of Judah’s (Southern Israel where Jerusalem is located) urge to practice religious ritual and “conspicuous consumption” side-by-side. On God’s behalf, he urged an altered agenda: “Do justice, embrace faithful love, and walk humbly with your God.” Those of us who follow Jesus serve the same God as Micah. We talk about being Jesus Christ to the world by loving God, loving others, and sharing the Good News. That love is servant love or what in Hebrew is called “*hesed*” or “loving kindness.” Like Micah, we believe weekly pious rituals matter less than treating people justly every day.

-  Micah kept ironically proposing bigger and bigger sacrifices in verses 6-7 to try to please God. He ended with child sacrifice, a ghastly practice some Israelites may have adopted (see **1 Kings 17:15-17**). What do the three divine requirements Micah listed tell you about what God is like?
-  “To walk” was the Hebrew way to identify a person’s lifestyle. In what ways does your lifestyle reflect your choice to be the person your God calls you to be? In what ways do your culture and community fall short of doing justice, embracing faithful loving kindness, and walking humbly with God? Micah’s does not include what people should not do but instead presents a positive case of what God thinks is best for humanity How can you actively move yourself, your family, your workplace, and community toward God’s best for humankind?

(Meditation Moments –November 12-13, 2022 – For more, go to www.summitdurango.org)

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, my goal is to walk justly, kindly, and humbly with you. Lead and guide me into the newness of life that you died and rose again to offer me. Amen.*

Tuesday, November 15 – Read [Psalm 18:46-50](#). As with many other positive qualities, the Bible did not say kindness springs automatically out of the human heart’s generous impulses. Psalm 18 praised God’s kindness to David, using the multi-layered Hebrew word *hesed*. Modern English versions often use a phrase like “faithful love” to render *hesed* when it speaks of God, while often choosing “kindness” to express *hesed*’s meaning when it’s about how people act, as in [Micah 6:8](#). As in today’s text, in [Psalm 90:14-17](#) kindness begins with God.

☛ We often discuss our “legacy,” sometimes making it sound (and perhaps thinking) as if the legacy is solely the result of our own work. The psalmists, on the other hand, always sought to give God the praise, whether for a victory in battle or in reflecting on the results of a long life. With God’s help, there is the possibility of something enduring amid the reality of the shortness of human life. Have you ever asked God’s divine kindness to be a major force shaping your legacy? Will you?

☛ God showed David “faithful love” or “kindness” (Hebrew *hesed*)—but not just David. [Galatians 3:26](#) said we are, “all God’s children through faith in Christ Jesus.” God offers that same loving kindness to everyone who chooses to be his child. What does it mean to your faith to know God values you as much as the writer of Psalm 18? In what ways has God “rescued” you over the course of your life, from both outer and inner “enemies”?

Prayer: *Lord God, it’s easy for me to forget that often quietly and unobtrusively, you are always with me. Enable me to remember and value your kind presence shaping and guiding me. Amen.*

Wednesday, November 16 – Read [Proverbs 21:21](#) and [Zechariah 7:9-10](#). We can think kindness means relatively “small” actions like baking a few extra cookies to take to a neighbor’s house. Well, yes, but it takes in much more. The sages of Hebrew wisdom grouped kindness with “big” ideas like life, righteousness, and honor. And the prophet Zechariah, in a passage that addressed the question of whether Israel should resume certain rituals after their return from exile, instead linked kindness to justice and walking humbly with God.

☛ Zechariah reminded Israel that genuine faith is demonstrated, not in rote ritual, but in rendering true judgments, kindness and mercy as we read in verse 9. We are to act on behalf of the powerless in our world, taking particular care not to do harm to widows, orphans, strangers, and the poor. How does your heart respond to Zechariah’s prophetic call to extend “kindness” beyond the easiest people to reach to those who may need it the most?

☛ Proverbs 21:21, like [Micah 6:6-8](#) (our memory verse for the week) used the sweeping Hebrew word *hesed* in its sense of kindness toward others. The two qualities of righteousness and kindness sum up a good life for the Hebrew authors. How does Proverbs’ wisdom here match up with your list of what makes for a “good life”? How intentionally do you “pursue” righteousness and kindness?

Prayer: *Creator God, I’m often busy figuring out “the good life” for myself, with only my own pleasure as the major guideline. Show me, day by day, how-to live-in ways that pursue righteousness and kindness. Amen.*

Thursday, November 17 – Read [Luke 6:27-36](#). Jesus taught his followers how to live with his peace and joy. Yet he realized that not all would be willing to accept what he taught: “I say to you

who are willing to hear.” The types of behavior Jesus described are not natural to any of us. We only move toward Jesus' kind of open, fear-free life as we allow the Holy Spirit to reshape our natural impulses to grow the fruit of kindness in our lives, like we also read in [Matthew 5:44-45](#).

✚ Jesus gave specific examples, not to set up new, onerous rules for us, but to show in practice the spirit in which he called us to live. As The Message put [Luke 6:30](#), “If someone takes unfair advantage of you, use the occasion to practice the servant life. No more tit-for-tat stuff. Live generously.” When has someone touched your life for the better by living kindly and generously? When have you found the joy of extending kindness to someone else?

✚ Luke linked the Golden Rule which read, “Treat people in the same way that you want them to treat you,” in verse 31 to Jesus' words about how to treat enemies. In what relationships do you find it hardest for you to treat others as you'd wish them to treat you? How can Jesus' teaching help you discern how to live out the Golden Rule in ways that bless others while you maintain healthy boundaries and self-care?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, pray for those who mistreat me? Love my enemies? You did it, but you were—well, you. I'm willing to listen to your teaching and learn your ways. Amen.*

Friday, November 18 – Read [Matthew 28:16-20](#). We call today's Scripture “the Great Commission.” That commission includes caring about “all nations,” always choosing to invest our energy and talents in making the lives of others better. “Making disciples” is not a part-time effort—something you do when you have nothing more important on your agenda. Jesus called all his people to an ongoing choice to invest our talents to “make disciples.” A “disciple” is not just someone who knows some facts about Jesus. A disciple intends to imitate Jesus in all parts of life. The central task given Jesus' followers is to make disciples, with going, baptizing, and teaching, serving this central task. Note that they are to make disciples for Jesus, whose commandments they are told to obey in [Matthew 7:21-27](#), not for themselves.

✚ This passage gave both a command, and a promise. Jesus addressed the command to all his followers: “Go...make disciples of all nations...baptizing them...and teaching them.” In what ways are you gifted to help carry out this commission? In what ways does Jesus' command give “the church” an attitude like a hospital that is open 24/7, not a fortress shut tightly against “enemies” or “outsiders”?

✚ Jesus' promise was far more priceless than anything a MasterCard could buy you: “Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” He made that promise based on having “all authority in heaven and on earth.” In his day, that meant not even the Roman Empire could block him from being with his followers. And no power on earth today has the authority to make Jesus abandon you. How can knowing Jesus is with you give you courage, strength, and peace? How can it make us fearless as a congregation?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, I want to glorify you with my faithful commitment to make disciples. Help me remember that you are always present with me as I live out your commission. Amen.*

Saturday, November 19 – Read [Colossians 3:12-13](#). Nowhere in Scripture will you find, “Treat your neighbors with kindness, unless their beliefs differ from yours.” Implicit in Paul's instructions was the understanding that we are to treat all people with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. We are, in fact, to love all people. Yes, this becomes more complicated when people's fundamental beliefs are not the same as ours, especially if they do not treat you in these ways. Rather than looking at this as a problem and trying to “fix” them, Paul said in places like [Romans 14:1-15:7](#) we should attempt to love extravagantly, working to find

unity in unexpected places. In today's world, we have the chance to do that in digital spaces as well as in the more personal settings Paul no doubt had in mind.

✚ Paul wrote in Romans 14:19, "So let's strive for the things that bring peace and the things that build each other up." Why is this harder when people's beliefs are different than yours? What is one concrete thing you can do this week that builds up another person, especially a person with whom you differ? What principles can guide you in deciding when loving your neighbor is more valuable than winning an argument? John Wesley, Methodism's founder, said in a sermon titled "A Catholic Spirit," "Even though a difference in opinions or modes of worship may prevent an entire external union, yet need it to prevent our union in affection? Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without doubt, we may." How did Paul's teachings in today's passages shape Wesley's theology? Is there someone in your life with whom you do not think alike, yet you need to love alike?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, give me clarity about my daily need for your forgiving, empowering grace to nurture and grow me. And grow me into a person who makes kindness and forgiveness central to my rhythm of life. Amen.*

To read Wesley's entire sermon, "A Catholic Spirit" edited into modern English, [click here](#).