

“Like Jesus: The Leveling Gaze and Grace of Christ” | Rev. Josh Keller | November 1, 2020

Old Testament Reading: [Deuteronomy 7:6-9, 9:1, 6-7](#)

“For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. 7 It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, 8 but it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. 9 Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations....”

“Hear, O Israel: you are to cross over the Jordan today, to go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than you.... 6 “Know, therefore, that the Lord your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stubborn people. 7 Remember and do not forget how you provoked the Lord your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day you came out of the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the Lord.”

Epistle Readings: [Galatians 5:16-26](#)

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another....

[Ephesians 4:31-5:2](#)

31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along

Introduction

We live in an unkind world full of status levels and envy. Through the Gospel, God’s gaze and grace, God humbles us and lifts us to him. Freed from envy and competitiveness, we can then imitate Christ’s love and goodness.

Background

1. What kindness and goodness are.
 - a. Goodness is pursuing the good for others.
 - b. Kindness is tenderheartedness and compassion.
 - c. Kindness’s opposite is envy.
2. How we are unkind.
 - a. We compare ourselves to others.
 - b. Comparing ourselves to others feeds envy.
 - c. We think how to lower others.
3. How and why we can be kind.
 - a. It wasn’t because of our own goodness that God chose us ([Deuteronomy 9:7](#)), and we have no righteousness of our own ([Romans 3:23](#)).
 - b. God chooses those unrighteous through a radical intervention of love and goodness. God’s grace humbles us.
 - c. In the family of God, his communicable characteristic is kindness; all good gifts come from him, and God is good to all ([James 1:17](#), [Psalm 145:9](#)).
 - d. We as God’s children imperfectly but certainly imitate the Father, who was good and kind when we didn’t deserve it ([Ephesians 5:1](#)).

Discuss

1. How can we know whether we are being kind to others or seeking to get something for ourselves? ([Luke 6:35](#))
2. Can you describe a time you acted in envy or competitiveness?
3. Can you describe a time someone showed you God’s kindness?
4. What does God’s choosing us while we were still sinners teach us about grace?
5. What is one practice we could adopt to honor God’s grace by kindness to others, even to “the ungrateful and the evil”? ([Luke 6:35](#))

Conclusion/Application

Ours is an unkind world. We envy and compete, harming ourselves and our neighbors as we envy them and compare ourselves with them. The church is the family of God, brothers and sisters brought by grace to the same level by the same invitation to all. When we remember and honor God’s grace to us, we imitate Christ in kindness and goodness.

Prayer

Father, you are perfect in kindness and goodness. We confess that we often compare ourselves to others and think and act in envy and competitiveness. Thank you for leveling us and showing us how it is by grace we have been saved and that every good and perfect gift is from you. Please help us consider others as more significant than ourselves. Help us show goodness and kindness to them as you have to us. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

5:1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. 2 And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Gospel Reading: [Luke 6:32-36](#)

If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34 And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. 35 But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. 36 Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.