

WEDNESDAY DEVOTION - GATEKEEPERS WORKCAMP 2017

Matthew 25:31-40: When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?" And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."

1 John 3:17: How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?

I hope it doesn't come as a surprise to any of us that kindness toward others is an important theme in the Bible. There are hundreds of verses that tell us to be kind, compassionate, loving, patient, and merciful to other people-- to the people we love, to people we've never met before, to those who are like us and those who are very different from us, even to our enemies. The expectation of kindness grows out of gratitude for God's goodness to us and our recognition that ALL people are persons of worth who are also created in God's image. Scripture is very clear that how we treat others is an indicator of the genuineness of our faith and our love for God.

And Scripture is also clear that God calls us to a kindness that is not just warm feelings and nice words. Kindness in God's kingdom is an action. We are instructed to be kind by meeting the needs of others, by giving of our time and talents and resources to help those who are vulnerable and powerless, by giving of ourselves for the sake of those we meet. What does the Lord require? That out of the great mercy and abundant blessings God has given to us, we are to offer tangible, active, loving kindness to those around us. Kindness and compassion, then, are essential parts of assembling a life that is pleasing to God.

Think again about the examples of kindness mentioned in the verses above. Are there any that surprised you? Which ones do you think are most difficult for us to do? What other examples come to mind? Have each person name at least one way he or she can show kindness this week-- to your homeowner, to other members of the crew, to family members and friends, or in other ways.

Say a prayer of thanksgiving for the opportunities we have this week to work hard and serve and for the energy and skills your crew has been given to do the work. Ask God to give you eyes to see the needs in our world and an open heart to respond with generosity and kindness. Pray that you might find ways to give of yourself and your talents in order to make this week even more meaningful for your homeowners and other crew members.