# Let’s Make a Habit of Kindness

## Week 4 – Sunday 10 March (Mothers’ Day)

#### ‘Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works.’ (Hebrews 10:24, NLT)

On this Mothers’ Day we give thanks for the kindness we’ve been
shown in our lives – by a mother, by other care-givers, by friends and
colleagues, by our church family, and of course by God. Every act of kindness has nurtured and ‘mothered’ us, and so our faithful response to God is to keep the kindness going. We ‘pay it forward’, choosing to shower kindness on those around us.

## Sermon Outline

#### Luke 10:25-37

‘He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him.’ (v34)

### Introduction:

One of the challenges this story raises is our tendency as humans to do the ‘right’ thing or the popular thing instead of the kind thing. You could start your talk by inviting the congregation to ponder some dilemmas – modern-day situations where they might be conflicted over what to do; situations where they feel torn between kindness and something else (wisdom, time-saving, duty, looking good to others etc).

Or, for a slightly more light-hearted, contemporary look at the parable, you could devise a sketch where someone is on their way to do something kind (take a bag of food to the food bank, for instance), but they keep getting waylaid by people interrupting them with various things: fun things, necessary things, popular things, duties and responsibilities etc.

People may also find it easier to think about kindness if they start by remembering a moment when someone was kind to them. That may have been their mother, or someone else. They may also find it helpful to think about a time when they’ve felt an overwhelming impulse to be kind to another person. That instinct is very real and powerful for mums.

Jesus grew up in a religion with strict rules. That’s how God had set things out, way back in Moses’ time, and goodness was intrinsically linked to a person’s ability to live within those rules. That’s just one of the reasons why this story is so ground-breaking. It was Jesus challenging people to stop doing things just because they’d been told to, or because they thought it would make them acceptable to God and other people. And the reason for going against those rules was kindness. Kindness had got lost amidst the business of trying to be faithful to a religion.

### *Kindness* means stopping

The road from Jericho to Jerusalem had a nickname. It was known as ‘the way of blood’ because of all the violence that happened there. It was definitely the sort of road you’d want to rush along – or rush away from.

Two men did rush on by. They were both religious, both people who would have been looked up to, people who would have had the right answer to all the most important questions in life.

Then there was one man who didn’t walk by. He was a member of a despised minority group and wouldn’t have been credited with being right about anything to do with God or holiness. Yet in Jesus’ story he’s the one who obeys the second greatest commandment to love his neighbour.

Long before he knew whether he could help or not, the Samaritan stopped. He let his timetable be derailed. He postponed whatever he was on his way to.

Do we stop?

* Are we so busy that we don’t even notice where kindness is needed?
* Are we at our least kind when we’re in a rush or under pressure?
* How can we slow down enough to be kind?

### Kindness touches

The two men who walked past were doing the ‘right’ thing. Jesus tells his listeners that the man who’d been attacked had been left for dead, which suggests he looked like he might have been killed. In the Jewish Law it was unthinkable for a religious person to touch a dead body, as it made them ritually unclean. The two religious men didn’t touch the injured man in case he sullied them, whereas the Samaritan didn’t hesitate to go to the man, touch him and put oil and wine on his wounds, substances which between them have antiseptic, anaesthetic and anti-inflammatory properties. It’s interesting to note here that tending wounds was traditionally the task of women; but this man didn’t hesitate to bring the tenderness of a mother to the man in need.

Jesus’ listeners would have been shocked at his suggestion that the two religious men got anything wrong. Yet that’s what he seems to be saying. In observing their religious tradition, they had failed to obey one of the most important commandments – the commandment to love their neighbour.

* Where do we draw the line at who we will ‘touch’? Do we withdraw from certain people?
* What rules might we need to break, in order to be kind?
* Who is God calling us to reach out and care for?

### Kindness is lavish

If you ask people to remember a time they’ve experienced someone being kind to them, it will often include a sense of generosity, of going above and beyond. We say ‘You’re kind’ when we’ve been given more than we expected or asked for.

The care the Samaritan gave was lavish. He used his own costly resources to tend to the man’s wounds, then paid for his ongoing care. Could he afford it easily, or did he have to trust God for his own needs?

And, by the way, here we are again with oil, that substance of hope and miracles we reflected on last week; and wine, that substance that reminds us of Jesus transforming water into something far richer. This is a story of a broken man receiving an abundance, not just in tangible things like bed and board, but also in intangible things like hope and a new lease of life.

Kindness refuses to buy into the fear that there isn’t enough to go around, or that there isn’t enough time to help. Kindness gives lavishly.

* Stop for a few moments and invite people to give thanks to God for lavish kindness they have known.
* Where is God asking us to be lavish? Is God asking us to give, and to trust that our own needs will be met?
* The best way to work towards being lavish is to start small and grow the habit. What might God be asking us to do this week, to start stretching our kindness muscles?

### Conclusion:

Most people want to be kind. Maybe the priest and the Levite wanted to be kind. The problem isn’t the desire, it’s the obstacles which get in the way. What are the obstacles we need to move aside so we can be as kind as we want to be?

## Prayer and Worship Ideas

### A prayer of confession and commitment to a habit of kindness:

Gracious God, forgive us when we leave no time or space for kindness;

When our own over-packed agenda causes us to rush on past the one who most needs our time;

When we hesitate to touch another person’s life because we feel embarrassed or judged.

By your grace, help us to open our hearts to your compassion,

Letting it fill us,

Letting it draw us towards those in need of help.

Lord, we want to be those who reflect your loving kindness in all we do:

Keep us alert to the prompting of your Spirit,

That we might notice those who need our care.

Renew in us a love that leaps the hurdles of awkwardness and people-pleasing,

That we might touch those whom others won’t touch.

Grow in us a generous spirit,

That we may become ever more lavish in our kindness,

In Jesus’ name. Amen.

### Blessing women

The Church has long had a tradition of giving flowers to women on Mothering Sunday, but what about refocusing that activity to create little ‘pamper packs’ for women in your local community who are in need of support? You could take some time in the meeting to ask people to write a card to go in one of the packs – a card with a Bible verse or a few words of blessing.

### The fragrance of kindness

The Good Samaritan’s act of kindness would have left a heady aroma. The wine would have smelt pungent, and the oil would have been perfumed like incense. The man who’d been attacked literally ended up smelling of kindness.

Invite people to dip a finger in some scented oil and to dab it on the back of their hand. Then, as they inhale the fragrance, invite them to remember and give thanks for those moments when they have known kindness in their lives, either from their mother, or more generally.

You could also give people scented oil to take home with them, and invite them to do a prayer walk with it. As they pass places where they long to see more kindness, they could pray for kindness to grow there, and they could daub a little of the oil on the wall, door or pavement. They might also meet people they want to anoint and pray for (though only with the person’s permission, of course).

### Get involved with the 2024 Helping-Hand Appeal

This year’s Helping-Hand Appeal is designed to help you and your community to pray, raise money and increase awareness about the issue of human trafficking, and to stand alongside survivors.

You’ll find a video, more resources and all the other info you need here:

<https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/international-development/helping-hand-appeal>

### 20 days of kindness

When we want to develop habits, we often need to build the right muscles, and the best way to do that is slowly and consistently.

Invite people to commit to doing at least one kind thing every day until Easter – something they don’t have to do, but they do because they know it will help someone else.