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A life of gentleness means being human

The weirdest and hardest thing about living during the age of COVID is almost everything.

I would be lying to you if I did not say that the last six to seven months have been simply put as weird in ways for me.

I went on spring break for my final semester of seminary and never got to come back.

I never got to say goodbye to my friends that had become my support system during the last three years.

Funny story too, I went straight from undergraduate in December 2016 to Seminary and did not have time to go to my graduation then,

So I told myself I would make sure my seminary graduation was a big deal... but due to COVID there was no graduation.

And on top of those weird feelings, My Papa died a week before my graduation.

In fact, He actually died the day I was supposed to interview for this job.

He died an hour and 30 minutes before I was suppose to get on a zoom call and interview for a job that was everything I had hoped for and prayed for,

I panicked.

I started calling Pastor Dan, who had no idea who I was,

We had never talked before and it went to voicemail.

I frantically left him a voicemail trying to sound my most professional while trying to hold back tears.

My hope was that Pastor Dan and the search team would understand my need to reschedule.

I immediately went to call Emilia at the church office,

When Dan's name flashed across my phone.

I answered the called and jumped right into explaining how he had a heart attack and it was a very sudden and unexpected death.

I went on to explain my hopes of rescheduling the interview, while also stressing that I couldn't interview today,

And Dan stopped me from talking.

He told me to not worry the interview could be rescheduled,

Then asked me how I was doing with the news...

PAUSE

What Dan showed me during that phone call is what Paul was talking about in today scriptures.

Dan did not know me from Adam.

Yet, he stopped his daily process and his unusual schedule of interviewing to ask a stranger how she was doing.

Paul uses the word gentleness in today's scriptures,

That we as christians are to show gentleness,

I have been hung up on that word while thinking and brainstorming over this sermon,

Because to be honest when Paul says gentleness,

it makes me think of bambi from the Disney cartoon,

However, when one looks up the attributes of gentleness, this is what comes up:

- Kindness
- Consideration
- Humanity
- Understanding
- Humility
- Reverence
- Tranquility
- Hope
- And encouragement

Dan was representing all those things in that phone call.

Gentleness is not Bambi from the Disney cartoon,

Gentleness is being a decent human,

A gentle person is someone who understands the fact that their neighbor is going through the same human experience as they are.

It is being able to recognize that we each carry our own pain,

Our own stories,

And that God cares about each of our pains and stories.

That God has given us grace that we do not deserve,

Thus we share the grace and love we know from God to others.

That is what God's kingdom coming to Earth looks like and feels like.

pause

The best example in my opinion of this gentleness comes from the words of Jesus,

In Luke chapter 10, Jesus tells the parable of the good samaritan,

For those who may not know this story, the quick recap is

a Jewish man was traveling from Jerusalem to jericho.

On the way the man falls into the hands of robbers.

The robbers beat the man until he was near death and left him on the side of the road.

Around the time the robbers left, a priest came traveling down the road,

But when he saw the beaten man,

He turned his head the other way and kept traveling.

A Levite happened came traveling down the road as well,

And he also turned his head when he saw the beaten man,

And kept traveling.

About that time,

A samaritan happened to be traveling down the road,

He saw the injured man,

And jumped to help.

He cleaned up the man's wounds,

Put him on his own animal,

And took him to the nearest town.

He took care of him all night long.

When the next day came and the man had to leave,

He paid the innkeeper for the room where the injured man was.

He then told the innkeeper to take care of the injured man,

And if he did that he would repay him whatever he spent when he came back.

The best part of the story to me is that the two people in the parable,

Who are suppose to hate each other,

Are the one needing help and the one doing the helping.

The samaritan is not doing this because he likes the Jewish man or because they voted the same way,

or because they run in the same social crowds,

Or because they used the same slang words or understood everything about each other,

Actually the opposite is true.

He takes care of the man because he is a fellow human.

Jesus is bringing us back to the basics of what it means to be human with this parable.

Jesus is reminding us of the unconditional love and grace that we have received ourselves,

And that we are to be examples of that love and grace everywhere we go...

pause

Most of us have all been taught the golden rule from a young age,

Treat others as you want to be treated,

But how many of us practice this rule.

We may attempt to or think about it,

But how many of us even remember this rule when going about our daily lives?

There is a very famous book called, "The Alchemist,"

This book is a story about a young shepherd boy,
who is sent out from his homeland of Spain to find buried treasure near the pyramids in
Egypt,

This attention grabbing tale is less about a boy finding treasure,
And more about discovering oneself.

Before the boy sets on his quest, he meets a wise king,

One piece of advice that the wise king tells the boy is that
Everyone forgets.

The king states that at some point in everyone's life when they are young,

Everything is clear and everything is possible,

People are not afraid to dream and to laugh,

Children love without being told to love,

They just know how in their soul.

But as time passes,

People forget.

People forget to dream,

and laugh,

and love.

It is almost as a mysterious force makes them forget.

The King goes on to tell the boy that God has created every human for a purpose,

That every life has a purpose,

that every life is worthy to be lived and lived fully,

But the king adds that most people forget that as well.

People forget their humanity is the king's point,

And when people forget their own humanity,

Then they most definitely will forget everyone else's humanity as well.

pause

Paul knows deeply about this subject because before Paul was Paul, he was Saul.

A man who persecuted Christians.

Paul knew what it was like to forget God's grace,

To forget about the humanity of your fellow neighbor because Paul forgot.

And then he is reminded of the love and grace that only God can give.

Paul is writing to the church at Philippi to remind them,

To remind them that they are to seek what is righteous,

He tells them in verse 8 to keep their mind focused on the things that are true, honorable, and just.

He is calling Christians to live a life that represents the love and grace we receive,

It is like Pastor Dan and I pray, we are the only hands and feet God has on this earth to show

God's words of love, hope, and peace...

We are the body of the church.

Do not get confused,

Gentleness does not mean letting people take advantage of you.

Even Jesus flipped tables in the temple when he needed to-

And at the end of the day,

Jesus is the true example of what we should strive for.

pause

And none of us will be perfectly gentle people,

100% of the time.

We were not created to be perfect beings.

We are created to mess up,

To learn,

To forgive and to ask for forgiveness,

To love,

To laugh,

To dream,

We were created to be human.

pause

Next week will be the first time that we open the doors to the sanctuary,

We will start worshiping in person and online as one church family.

Come with a gentle heart.

Come through the doors after spending time praying, reflecting, and thinking on what it means to be called to a life of gentleness.

Come home ready to love your church family and guests,

from a safe distance with a mask on,

And love them not in spite of differences,

But in fact because God has created each of us uniquely and wonderfully in the image of
God,

Because we are all children of God,
who deserve and are worthy of gentleness.

Because how boring would life be if we were all the same

pause

Come ready to love each other

Because we are all human,

Going through this journey we call life together.

Prepare your hearts for worship.

Prepare your heart with gentleness and focus your thoughts on what is honorable. Ashay and
amen.