

Pastor's Note

Hello Gary

We're looking at God's lovingkindness but I want to touch on the subject of love for just a moment because it will help us to define God's kindness. 1John 4:7-8 "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love." God is love. Not, God loves. Not, God knows what love is. God is love. He is the very essence of what love is. This is what the Word says about love in 1Corinthians 13:1-8 "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing. Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails."

Notice that all of the descriptions of love are framed in terms of actions. (Repeat them) Love is not a gooey feeling we get when our hormones are raging. Love is defined by actions. Love does not describe some esoteric emotional state. Love does something. It is moved to action on behalf of the object of ones affection. In the middle of this passage Paul says something that is critical to today's sermon and to understanding the character of God. Love is kind. Love moves one to act with kindness toward the object of their affection. So, 1John says, God is Love. 1 Corinthians says, Love is kind. By logical reasoning we can conclude that, God is Kind. $A^2 + B^2 = C^2$ God is love. Love is kind. God is Kind. So God is kind, what does that mean?

How does that effect His approach to dealing with His creation, human beings? How does that effect what He does? As we learned a few weeks ago, God causes things to happen for three reasons; for correction, for His world, and for His lovingkindness. Job 37:10-14 "From the breath of God ice is made and the expanse of the waters is frozen. Also with moisture He loads the thick cloud; He disperses the cloud of His lightning. It changes direction, turning around by His guidance, that it may do whatever

He commands it on the face of the inhabited earth. Whether for correction, or for His world, or for lovingkindness, He causes it to happen." He causes things to happen for correction, for His world, and for His lovingkindness. These three things are not isolated entities. They are intertwined. It's the Pythagorean theorem again, $A^2 + B^2 = C^2$.

God causes things to happen for our correction because God is loving and kind and He wants the best for us. We do the same for our children. Only a cruel and uncaring parent would willingly allow their children to grow up believe that stealing, lying, or cheating would make them happier in life. God causes things to happen on His world because He is loving and kind to his children who He created and who He provides a world for; a cozy little niche in the universe to live and breath on. God is kind. God corrects. God is kind. God provides. God causes things to happen out of His lovingkindness because he wants to bless His creation. For example, consider Lot when God spared him during the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Genesis 19:15-19 "When morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, 'Up, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away in the punishment of the city.' But he hesitated. So the men seized his hand and the hand of his wife and the hands of his two daughters, for the compassion of the LORD was upon him; and they brought him out, and put him outside the city. When they had brought them outside, one said, 'Escape for your life! Do not look behind you, and do not stay anywhere in the valley; escape to the mountains, or you will be swept away.' But Lot said to them, 'Oh no, my lords! Now behold, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have magnified His lovingkindness, which you have shown me by saving my life.'"

God had compassion on Lot to the point that He saved him in spite of himself. He literally had the angels seize Lot's hands and take him out of the city to save him. How often do we pray for God to help us in a situation and we aren't even aware of it when God sends the help? In fact, we often fight the very help that God sends, tooth and nail, because we don't recognize it for what it really is. In the end Lot recognized that the angels were a magnification of God's lovingkindness. Now behold, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have magnified His lovingkindness. God is Kind.

God in his infinite wisdom and kindness chose a wife for Abraham's son Isaac. Let's read in Genesis 24:1-27 "Now Abraham was old, advanced in age; and the LORD had blessed Abraham in every way. Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his household, who had charge of all that he

owned, 'Please place your hand under my thigh, and I will make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I live, but you will go to my country and to my relatives, and take a wife for my son Isaac.' The servant said to him, 'Suppose the woman is not willing to follow me to this land; should I take your son back to the land from where you came?' Then Abraham said to him, 'Beware that you do not take my son back there! The LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my birth, and who spoke to me and who swore to me, saying, 'To your descendants I will give this land,' He will send His angel before you, and you will take a wife for my son from there. But if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be free from this my oath; only do not take my son back there. So the servant placed his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter. Then the servant took ten camels from the camels of his master, and set out with a variety of good things of his master's in his hand; and he arose and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor. He made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water at evening time, the time when women go out to draw water. He said, 'O LORD, the God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today, and show lovingkindness to my master Abraham. Behold, I am standing by the spring, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water; now may it be that the girl to whom I say, 'Please let down your jar so that I may drink,' and who answers, 'Drink, and I will water your camels also'- may she be the one whom You have appointed for Your servant Isaac; and by this I will know that You have shown lovingkindness to my master.'" Before he had finished speaking, behold, Rebekah who was born to Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor, came out with her jar on her shoulder. The girl was very beautiful, a virgin, and no man had had relations with her; and she went down to the spring and filled her jar and came up. Then the servant ran to meet her, and said, 'Please let me drink a little water from your jar.' She said, 'Drink, my lord'; and she quickly lowered her jar to her hand, and gave him a drink. Now when she had finished giving him a drink, she said, 'I will draw also for your camels until they have finished drinking.' So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough, and ran back to the well to draw, and she drew for all his camels. Meanwhile, the man was gazing at her in silence, to know whether the LORD had made his journey successful or not. When the camels had finished drinking, the man took a gold ring weighing a half-shekel and two bracelets for her wrists weighing ten shekels in gold, and said, 'Whose daughter are you? Please

tell me, is there room for us to lodge in your father's house?' She said to him, 'I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor.' Again she said to him, 'We have plenty of both straw and feed, and room to lodge in.' Then the man bowed low and worshiped the LORD. He said, 'Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His lovingkindness and His truth toward my master; as for me, the LORD has guided me in the way to the house of my master's brothers.'"

God in His lovingkindness chose the perfect mate for Isaac. Nahor was Abraham's brother. Rebekah was Nahor's granddaughter. What was up with Abraham and Nahor's family? God really must have been working in this family for some time and certainly we know that He planned to work in their family moving forward. They are the family that becomes the Israelites. Abraham and Nahor's father Terah was the one who actually took Abraham out of his home country to go to Canaan. Terah died before they got there but Abraham continued on. Terah somehow raised a family pretty well in the midst of an age where kindness was not common. God is Kind.

Perhaps one of the most famous of Abraham's descendents was King David. A man that the bible says had a heart like God. David was a great songwriter and we see in his lyrics that he understood God's kindness. Psalm 42:1-8 "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all day long, 'Where is your God?' These things I remember and I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go along with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God, with the voice of joy and thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival. Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him for the help of His presence. O my God, my soul is in despair within me; therefore I remember You from the land of the Jordan and the peaks of Hermon, from Mount Mizar. Deep calls to deep at the sound of Your waterfalls; All Your breakers and Your waves have rolled over me. The LORD will command His lovingkindness in the daytime; And His song will be with me in the night, A prayer to the God of my life." God is Kind.

500 years later, about 1500 years after the time of Abraham, his descendents the Israelites, are finally returning from Babylonian captivity to their homeland and God provides a way for them to regain ownership of the land their forefathers had lost. Jeremiah 32:14-18 "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, 'Take these deeds, this sealed deed of purchase

and this open deed, and put them in an earthenware jar, that they may last a long time.' 'For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, 'Houses and fields and vineyards will again be bought in this land. After I had given the deed of purchase to Baruch the son of Neriah.' Then I prayed to the LORD, saying, 'Ah Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You, who shows lovingkindness to thousands, but repays the iniquity of fathers into the bosom of their children after them, O great and mighty God. The LORD of hosts is His name.'" God is Kind.

In Malachi God explains the natural law of giving so that we will be blessed. He is teaching human beings that the more you give away the more it will come back to you. It is a biblical principle. Like many biblical principles it does not make sense to us because we are raised in a secular society that teaches us to get as much as we can for ourselves and hoard it. The bible repeatedly gives example after example of why the secular approach does not work. God is not after our money. He doesn't need our money. All of the money in the world is at His disposal. Many people mistake God's motive for teaching people to tithe as being selfish. "Well the church just wants my money." Nothing could be further from the truth. God, in His unlimited lovingkindness wants to teach us the biblical principle of giving so that we will be blessed.

Malachi 3:10-11 "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this,' says the LORD of hosts, 'if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows. I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field lose its grapes,' says the LORD of hosts." God says, "Test Me." And see if I will not shower you with blessings until it overflows. This is the only place in the Bible that God actually says to us "Test Me." God is Kind.

2000 years after Abraham, Jesus Christ described how we should act if we want to mirror God's kindness, Luke 6:27-35 "But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back. Treat others the same way you want them to treat you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive,

what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same amount. 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 Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men." God is Kind.

Blessings,

Scott

