



# PRAYING OUR WAY FORWARD

 We are One in Christ  
PNW Conference Devotional • Day One

## SCRIPTURE

*Galatians 5:22-23, NRSV*

### THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things.

## REFLECTION: LOVE

*By Rev. David Valera*

Whenever our Pacific Northwest Filipino-American Clergy Caucus gathers, it gives the group an opportunity to share and listen to the many nuances we face as new and experienced pastors serving all types of congregational sizes, leanings, generations, cultures and subcultures. And when faced with difficult questions, like issues of inclusivity and Human Sexuality, the Rev. Stan DePano (retired) always reminds us to approach everything in LOVE. Be it our parishioners or the community we serve, he reminds us that "We as disciples of Jesus are sent to love."

I continue to appreciate such a voice of wisdom, reminding us not to respond in hatred, but to love, as Jesus loved.

## PRAYER

Dear God, as we see many signs of hatred in our midst, may we continue to follow your greatest commandment, to love YOU first, and others as ourselves. Make us stand firm in making your love known during these days of darkness, uncertainty and fear.

Come Holy Spirit. Come and be our voice of Love. Amen.



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## REFLECTION: JOY

*By Rev. Daniel Foster*

As a local church pastor I had the privilege of leading a congregation that sponsored well over 100 children in a small village in Kenya. This was done in conjunction with World Vision. As part of our sponsorship I travelled to that village to witness first hand the work World Vision was doing as a result of our support.

It was awe inspiring to see what was accomplished in terms of water acquisition, improved schools, etc. But what really inspired me was the joy so evident in people we encountered. This was especially so in the worship services we attended. Men, women, and children would walk literally for miles, in oppressive heat, to get to the service center. Worship was anything but a "sixty minutes and you're out" kind of experience. There was heavenly singing, jubilant dancing, and clear passion for the Lord they came to exalt. And all of it was saturated with joy.

Joy that didn't come from material possessions, beautiful homes, nice cars, or a secure 401K. It came from a deep connection with the Risen Savior.

*Cont.*

Sometimes I think the most difficult place to be a committed Christian is in the United States. We simply have it too easy, have too much, and take way too much for granted. Because of that we lose touch with where real joy comes from.

## **PRAYER**

Bring us back to you, Lord, the wellspring of genuine joy. Amen.



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## REFLECTION: PEACE

*By Rev. David Nieda*

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.  
*John 14:27*

These words spoken by Jesus come at a time of increasing uncertainty for the disciples. They had witnessed a royal reception for Jesus with shouts of "Hosanna!" as he entered into Jerusalem. They then experienced a complete reversal with Jesus taking the lowest of positions in washing their feet.

Immediately following, they heard him speak of a betrayal and denial from within the group and his own impending death. If it ever were an anxious time for the disciples, it was now. If ever they needed the gift of peace, it was now. Jesus assured the disciples that God's peace was with them.

These are anxious times for us. Despite this, God offers us this same peace that passes all understanding. And as receivers of that peace, we are called to live that peace within ourselves and with others despite worldly circumstances that create anxiety or conflict or division.

*Cont.*

Paul tells us in Romans, “If possible, to the best of your ability, live at peace with all people.” It is possible if we desire it, strive for it and lean into it. For with God, all things are possible.

## **PRAYER**

Holy One, offer us assurance, as Jesus did for his disciples, in the midst of our anxiety. Move within us so that we might seek your gift of peace and bless the world with the same.

Amen.



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## REFLECTION: KINDNESS

*By Rev. Cara Scriven*

While in most circles the words nice and kind are interchangeable, they are not in my house. I often talk to my daughters about the difference between these two words.

Nice is defined as “acting in a way that is correct according to social or moral rules.”<sup>1</sup> In this way, being nice is about being seen as well-behaved and following the norms established by society.

Kind, on the other hand, can be defined as “having or showing a gentle nature and a desire to help others.”<sup>2</sup> Kind is about a way of being that is not concerned about outward appearances or societal norms.

Disciples of Jesus may be nice but the Gospel calls us to be more than that. We are called to not only want, but also to enjoy doing good things for others. We do this, not for the sake of approval, but rather to bring others happiness.

I pray that through our conversations my daughters will have the spirit of kindness even when the norms of society dictate otherwise.

*Cont.*

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.learnersdictionary.com/definition/nice>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.learnersdictionary.com/definition/kind>

## PRAYER

Creator God, our parents taught us how to be nice and well-behaved so others will like us. We are grateful for this learning, but we know that you ask more of us. Stir within us, spirits of kindness and the desire to do good for others so that others may discover the abundant life you dream for them.

Amen.



# PRAYING OUR WAY FORWARD

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## REFLECTION: **GENEROSITY**

*By Rev. Gregg Sealey*

Whenever I think of the word “generosity,” I think of my wife’s grandfather. When my wife and I were first married and in graduate school, he would occasionally pay for us two, poor newlyweds to visit him on the opposite side of the country.

On one of these visits he gave us a check for the amount of the airfare, and when I objected he looked at me sternly and lovingly and said, “Gregg, a gift doesn’t become a gift until it is truly received.” Then he smiled and said, “All you need to do is say ‘thank you.’”

With a grateful tear in my eye I looked at him and said, “Thank you, Grandpa.”

This past September he passed from this life to the next at 93 years-old, but his impact on my life and what he taught me about generosity will not be forgotten.

Generosity is something that I have strived to cultivate throughout my adult life. I have had incredible mentors who have demonstrated generosity, and I find it encompasses every area of my life... How will I spend my time, my money and my energy?

*Cont.*



Will I spend these resources on my own wants and needs, or will I spend them to have an impact on others and to make the realm of God real in this world?

## **PRAYER**

Dear God, we pray that you will continue to cultivate generous hearts in us. Help us to give of our time, our money and our energy to see your will come to pass here and now.

Amen.



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## REFLECTION: GENTLENESS

*By Rev. Rich Lang*

It is gentleness that changes our destiny.

The world is a rough and tumble kind of place. The religious world, the world of strong beliefs and a quest for righteousness, is a particularly brutal neighborhood. In the name of love we can so quickly cast out what and who we think are demons. We can so quickly foreclose on friendships. We can so rapidly segregate our us from those we label them.

But it is gentleness that changes the scripts we write. It is gentleness that offers us the new neighborhood that God alone can provide. It is a gentle spirit that opens a future different from the past.

One day a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery was brought before Jesus who was put into position to act as judge. She was guilty and the verdict should have been clear. The accusers already had their rocks in hand ready to execute the righteous judgment. They were ready, in the name of God, in a perplexing, confusing, twisted understanding of love, to strike this woman from head to toe with weapons that would abuse her, torture her and eventually kill her.

*Cont.*

But Jesus, as a skilled artisan in the ways of the Spirit, creatively, courageously, turned aside their wrath and indignation, their holy hunger for righteousness, with a few very simple words, and with a very obvious refusal to segregate sinners from saints.

In such a gentle way not only was the future of that woman assured, but even now, centuries later, so is ours.

## **PRAYER**

May we all learn the artistry of gentleness, and may we all go forth and do likewise.

Amen.



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## REFLECTION: SELF-CONTROL

*By Rev. Mary Huycke*

Love calls forth self-control. It is the management of one's power for the sake of right-relationship.

Truly caring about someone pulls us beyond our own self-absorption and self-defined reality. Truly wanting to hear what someone has to say, leads us to limit how much space we take up in a conversation. Wanting to understand the meaning behind their words, leads us to be open to and curious about how that they see and experience the world. We listen, not to formulate a response, but to hear. And, when we speak, it is to lay our understandings alongside theirs, that in our differences a fuller picture might emerge.

Self-control allows the Body of Christ to function as a unified body. It trusts that God's wholeness comes from bringing together our differences, not erasing them. When a pair or group relates in this way, it is the holiest of moments. New and undreamt of pathways emerge.

A natural outcome of following the Way of Jesus – the way of love – is self-control --mindful action and interaction with the intention of serving the life, health and the well-being of others, of self, and of creation.

*Cont.*

## PRAYER

God, you are God and I am not. Help me trust the future you are bringing. Help me remember that its fullness requires us all – even those I would dismiss. Grant me both courage and restraint and the wisdom to know which is needed in the moment.

Amen.