

(Ephesians 4:31-5:2, EHV)

"Get rid of every kind of bitterness, rage, anger, quarreling, and slander, along with every kind of malice. Instead, be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ has forgiven us.

Therefore, be imitators of God as his dearly loved children. And walk in love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself for us, as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

A couple weeks ago, Janet and I entered a major home-improvement store and were immediately confronted by an attendant who informed us that we had to wear masks in the store, and that if we didn't have a mask we could purchase one at a nearby counter for a dollar. To which I replied, "Okay, we won't come in then." And we turned and left the store and went to another major home-improvement store that didn't require us to wear masks. I confess, I was not happy with being made against my will to wear a mask.

It wasn't until later, when we were discussing that event, that my dear wife offered this insight: if our wearing of masks somehow makes others feel safer and more at ease in patronizing area businesses, then to help local businesses and our local economy we should be willing to wear masks.

I share this personal story to illustrate how our motivations play a serious role in our actions. Why do we do what we do? Do we wear masks to conform to societal pressure -- to go-along to get-along -- or to "virtue signal" (to send the message: "I'm wearing a mask; see, I'm a good person!")? Or do we wear masks out of genuine concern for others?

Where God's law is silent on particular issues -- He neither commands nor forbids something -- we as Christians have freedom to act according to our conscience. But with that freedom comes responsibility, as St. Paul warns: "And be careful that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak" (1 Corinthians 8:9). Rather than trampling on the sensibilities of others, Paul took the kinder, gentler approach: "To the weak, I became weak so that I might gain the weak. I have become all things to all people so that I may save at least some" (1 Corinthians 9:22).

We are representatives of Christ and never want to offend or put a stumbling block in the path of those for whom Jesus suffered and died. As we venture out in public and interact with others, we may need to put on a mask, but first let's always remember to "put on love" (Colossian 3:14).

Walking in love with you in Christ's,
Pastor Golm

May 28

Kindness

The fruit of the Spirit is ... gentleness. Galatians 5:22

The word which our English Bible translates "gentleness" in the above passage could perhaps better be translated "kindness". And still more specifically, it is a sort of active kindness that the apostle had in mind; not only a kindness which refrains from doing evil to one's neighbor, but a kindness that is always on the alert, looking for ways to help him and to be of service to him.

How desperately the world today needs that sort of kindness, that attitude which is willing not only to look upon every human being as our friend, as a fit subject for the full measure of our love, but which is willing also to translate itself into deeds of kindness to every person whose life touches ours.

We all are in danger of restricting our kindness to our thoughts or to our words. We think kindly thoughts. We speak generous words. Perhaps we even find ourselves breathing a silent "God, bless you!" when we see people who are in need. But the fruit of the Spirit is an outgoing, active kindness—a kindness which DOES something about the needs of our neighbor.

It is quite possible that the priest and the Levite in the parable thought kindly about the poor man who fell among the thieves. But the Good Samaritan did more than think—he acted. It is this kind of action in the Christian life which is "the fruit of the Spirit".

Such kindness is but the natural expression of a heart which has been transformed by the Savior's love. When we find ourselves becoming cold, callous, or indifferent to the needs of those around us, or perhaps even openly rude, uncharitable, or unkind, let us flee again and again to his love for pardon and for strength.

Give me a faithful heart, Likeness to Thee;
That each departing day Henceforth may see
Some work of love begun, Some deed of kindness done,
Some wand'rer sought and won, Something for Thee.