

# Kindness

## ADVENT DEVOTION – WEEK 2 | DECEMBER 9–15, 2018

BY JILL DUFFIELD, PRESBYTERIAN OUTLOOK EDITOR

### COLOSSIANS 3:12

Holiday ties. Gaudy green and red socks. Sparkly earrings, necklaces and pins. Families in matching outfits on the front of greeting cards. Advertisements for pajamas — for not just parents and children, but pets too. This time of year is filled with all manner of seasonal clothing. Hair accessories, purses, belts, pants, shoes. You name a wearable item and it comes bedecked with Santa or candy canes or reindeer. There are even parties dedicated to displaying the ugliest of the clichéd Christmas sweater. Many of our closets contain a treasured or tacky (or both!) item that can only be worn from Thanksgiving to December 25. Christmas and clothing go together.

But what if we thought about a different kind of outward appearance this Advent? What if we thought about what it means to be clothed in Christ? Displaying not just a blinking accessory but the visible traits of the Savior for whom we wait?

Colossians admonishes us: “As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, *kindness*, humility, meekness, and patience.” What would it look like to put on compassion, *kindness*, humility, meekness and patience no less obviously than we don our Santa socks and candy cane sweaters? Could we consciously choose one of the words from this verse and put it into practice in our daily interactions? What does it look like to be compassionate with our family? *Kind* to our co-workers? Patient with those who push our buttons? Might we humbly ask questions rather than assume we know the right answer?

In Scripture we are told that God possess loving *kindness*. In other words, a defining characteristic of our God is loving *kindness*, evident in God’s dealings with us and with all creation. Are we, too, exhibiting loving *kindness*, as obvious as that ugly Christmas sweater?

### PRAYER:

Loving and kind God, you offer us the clothing of Christ, a new self, transformed and evident when we reflect your character. Help us this Advent to don the garments of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience. May the world see you in and through our Christ-like clothing. Amen.

## DAILY PRAYERS AND PRACTICES

### Monday — RUTH 2:17-20

In this text Naomi gives thanks for the kindness of Boaz who allowed Ruth to glean in his fields. His kindness was expressed in generosity, a generosity that helped Naomi and Ruth survive. When has someone been generous with you? When have you been generous?

### PRAYER FOR THE DAY:

Gracious God, for those times when the generosity of one of your followers gave us relief, respite and hope, we thank you. For those times when we have refrained from being generous and acted out of fear of scarcity, we apologize to you. Knowing that you held nothing back from us, not even your Son, we pray to be a kinder, more generous people. Amen.

## *Tuesday* — JOB 6:14

Kindness to others is related to our relationship to God. How we treat our fellow human beings reveals our connection, or lack thereof, to our God. What does it mean to you to be kind? Today, whatever kindness means to you, act in ways that reflect that definition. Reflect on the impact of your kind attitude and actions.

### PRAYER FOR THE DAY:

In a time when cruelty seems to override compassion, we pray, Lord of all, that we will not withhold kindness to our friends, our neighbors and, yes, even our enemies. Draw us closer to you so that we will learn from your grace and mercy the lesson of love poured out and shared. Amen.

## *Wednesday* — ISAIAH 63:7

How often do you praise God? For what do you praise God? Take time throughout the day to praise God for the many blessings of this life. Write down some of the gifts from God for which you offer praise and thanksgiving.

### PRAYER FOR THE DAY:

God of grace and God of glory, when we stop and consider the beauty of the earth, the gift of community, the diversity of creation, we cannot help but praise you for all that you have so fearfully and wonderfully made. We give you thanks for the wonder of each and every hour. We praise you for each and every breath. Amen.

## *Thursday* — MICAH 6:8

Doing justice, loving kindness and walking humbly with God sound like straightforward requirements, and yet we know all too well that clear and easy are not synonymous. Which of these three requirements do you find the most challenging? How might you practice that requirement today?

### PRAYER FOR THE DAY:

Lord, sometimes we want to pretend that we do not know what you require of us. We make excuses for our lack of faithfulness, saying that if we only knew what you wanted, we would do it. We ask again for your forbearance as we seek to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with you. Amen.

## *Friday* — ACTS 28:1-2

Welcoming the stranger, extending hospitality to not just those we know, but those we have never met before, is a frequent biblical theme and call. Who are the strangers in your midst in need of the warm fire of welcome?

### PRAYER FOR THE DAY:

We love because you first loved us, God. Jesus says when we welcome the stranger, we welcome him. Abraham ran out of his tent and offered his very best to three men who were in fact angels, your messengers. Help us this day to kindle fires of welcome for all. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

## *Saturday* — TITUS 3:3-8

Frequently in the epistles we are told that “we were once” a litany of hurtful and shameful things, “but now” we are transformed through Christ and able therefore to imitate him. Look at the list in this passage of what we “once were” and prayerfully ask God to keep working on your Christ-like makeover.

### PRAYER FOR THE DAY:

Loving God, we recognize that we often still live as we once did, despite the intervention of Christ's saving grace. Forgive us when we revert back to hurtful ways. Open us to the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit within us and through us. Amen.

 *Kindness* 