

“In Defense of Kindness: The Kindness of God”
Matthew 13:24-30 and Romans 2:4

Where does kindness come from? How do we replenish our source of kindness when we feel utterly depleted by the world's harshness?

The answer of faith is simple: God is the source of all kindness.

Yet, we often struggle to access this reservoir. The problem rarely lies in God's willingness to give; rather, it lies in our tendency to project our own harshness onto God. The late spiritual teacher Fr. Anthony de Mello used to tell a story about a man who was terrified of a massive, growling, aggressive dog that lived along his daily walk to work. Every day, the man would tremble, sweat, and tiptoe past the yard, terrified the dog would break its chain and tear him to pieces. One day, the man forgot his keys. Running late and rushing blindly, he accidentally tripped and crashed right through the rickety gate into the dog's yard.

He froze on the ground, bracing for the end. The massive, terrifying dog bounded over—and began vigorously licking the man's face. The dog wasn't vicious at all. It was lonely, enthusiastic, and desperate to love him.

This story mirrors the fears we so often carry about God. Our terrifying images of the Divine are frequently projections of our own woundedness and poor religious conditioning. The moment we actually "fall into" God's presence out of sheer helplessness, we discover that the entity we thought was a monster is actually desperate to pour out affection. As the Apostle Paul reminds us in Romans 2:4, it is *God's kindness* that is meant to lead us to repentance - not God's wrath, and not God's judgment.

In her profound book *The Kindness of God*, Catholic theologian and philosopher Janet Soskice examines the history of the word *kindness*. She notes:

“In Middle English the words ‘kind’ and ‘kin’ were the same - to say that Christ is ‘our kind Lord’ is not to say that Christ is tender and gentle, although that may be implied, but to say that he is kin - our kind. This fact, and not emotional disposition, is the rock which is our salvation.”

God's kindness is fundamentally about being connected to us. It is an intensely biblical concept, yet it often feels foreign because we tend to place God far beyond our reach. Even the word *Lord* in Middle English implied high nobility. To pair *kindness* (kinship)

with *Lord* meant a radical breaking down of barriers, division, and privilege. It meant the Creator of the Universe is our next of kin.

God is the source of all kindness because God is the one who holds all things in unity. All of our human divisions, projections, violence, and fears stem from our inability to access this truth. Trauma, exhaustion, and selfishness can all cause us to lose our connection to this source. But they all bring us to the same tragic destination: an inability to take in the goodness and love of God. We end up expecting God to be distant, separate, judgmental, vindictive, and harsh.

Jesus came to shatter that projection. He showed us, in the clearest way possible, that God loves us unconditionally and is willing to enter into the worst of our human pain for the sake of love. And yet, human beings have always struggled to receive a message of unconditional grace.

The Gray Areas of Grace

To help us understand this, Jesus tells a brilliant parable in Matthew 13 - a chapter filled with stories that turn our expectations of God's love completely upside down. He uses an image that an agricultural society would immediately recognize: the battle between a farmer and weeds.

(A modern equivalent of this might be the internet. It is a vast, interconnected field containing beautiful, life-giving content alongside toxic, destructive weeds. They grow in the exact same space.)

Let us listen to the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares from **Matthew 13:24-30**:

<https://youtu.be/yNCjyGwG-OM>

“He put before them another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well.

And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, “Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?” He answered, “An enemy has done this.” The slaves said to him, “Then do you want us to go and gather them?”

But he replied, “No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the

reapers, 'Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"

This parable would have been deeply shocking to Jesus' listeners. They would have expected the householder to immediately wage war on the weeds. We, too, love black-and-white solutions. We want the bad pulled out and the good rewarded *right now*.

The only problem is that in life, in relationships, in social structures, and even within our own hearts, there is a massive amount of gray. Good and bad exist at the exact same time.

One fascinating detail of this text is the specific Greek word used for weed: *zizania*. This refers to darnel, a noxious weed commonly known as "false wheat." In its early stages, darnel looks identical to wheat. The only time the difference becomes clear is at the harvest. When mature, the heads of true wheat become heavy with grain and droop gracefully toward the earth. The heads of the false wheat, having no real substance, stay perfectly straight, rigid, and upright.

Leaning into the Heart of Kindness

This parable reveals the stunning kindness and wisdom of God. Life is not simple. God knows that we are here on earth to learn how to love, and that part of learning involves making mistakes. Our goodness is often tangled up with our fears and shortcomings.

God is not like the anxious servants, frantic to root out every flaw at the expense of the whole ecosystem. God is the patient householder. God is kind enough to let us mature, allowing us the time and space to grow through both our successes and our failures.

Our invitation today is to see the unity of life that comes from the Creator. When you face the harshness of the world, or the harshness within your own soul, you do not have to tremble outside the gate. You can lean into the heart of Divine Kindness to be restored.

The time we spend enjoying God's love - through prayer, through play, through joy, and through peaceful reflection - imbues our souls with the very kindness we need to survive. It gives us the strength to live in human unity, despite all of its challenges. It frees us from the need to judge, and empowers us to simply love.

When we anchor ourselves in the kinship of God, we find the strength to extend kindness to a world that may not understand it, may not deserve it, and may not return it. But we do it anyway.

Let these famous words, often attributed to Mother Teresa, be our marching orders as we step back into the field of the world:

Anyway

By Mother Teresa

People are often unreasonable, illogical and self-centered;

Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives;

Be kind anyway.

If you are successful, you will win some false friends and some true enemies;

Succeed anyway.

If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you;

Be honest and frank anyway.

What you spend years building, someone could destroy overnight;

Build anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness, they may be jealous;

Be happy anyway.

The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow;

Do good anyway.

Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough;

Give the world the best you've got anyway.

You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and your God;

It was never between you and them anyway.

Amen.