

Gentle Thoughts

“...I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.² Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ~ Ephesians 4:1-2

One thing we seem to have lost in today’s world: The quality of gentleness. Jesus lifted it up in his travels of Galilee as a new, world-changing quality and people had trouble accepting it.

They were more of the “eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth” mentality. When Jesus spoke of loving your enemies, of turning the other cheek, it was like he was speaking a foreign language.

“Take my yoke upon you,” Jesus says, “and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

This yoke some take as a joke. It is the yoke which keeps the oxen at the gentle, strong pace as the ground is prepared for crops which give life.

We careen out of control, thinking strength is about making others do things or not experiencing the emotions God gave us. We need more gentleness. That world begins with God. It finds its way forward in and through each one of us.

People all over the world must see Christians whose gentleness does not make them a doormat, but a strong monument finding the way forward through quiet strength. God stands for timeless truths and unmatched blessings, and his people can be quietly gentle as they experience this.

Even Hindu Mahatma Gandhi, a transformer of his country, India, saw something in Jesus, that gentle nature, that transforming spirit which quietly and strongly makes a difference.

“I did once seriously think of embracing the Christian faith,” he writes. The gentle figure of Christ, so full of forgiveness that he taught his followers not to retaliate when abused or struck, but to turn the other cheek - I thought it was a beautiful example of the perfect man.”

Don’t you see that writers of television and movies today try to shock, to uncover completely the stark nature of life, in order to get their message across? Politicians and world leaders have turned away from quiet strength to excess and shouting at others. It is a time to return to what Jesus makes possible. Gentleness. Strength. Hope. Vision.

Paul the apostle, who was quite a person of drama and conflict even after he became a

Christian, writes, “ But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” ~Galatians 5:22

Gentleness, and all the things which go along with it, are the quiet transformers of the world. Being silent when we have the power to speak, letting others rise when we could do it easier ourselves, they can do much more trampling over others.

Douglas MacArthur, the great general of World War II, saw this quality as important. His prayer for his son went this way. “Build me a son, O Lord, who will be strong enough to know when he is weak, and brave enough to face himself when he is afraid, one who will be proud and unbending in honest defeat, and humble and gentle in victory.”

Think of the gentle people you have known. They rise to the forefront as wonderful memories, beautiful pictures. Then think of those who insisted on their own way at your expense. They are not so favorite memories, are they?

We can't do anything about how others should behave, but we can do something about ourselves. Following Jesus is about recapturing what he stands for, and walking with him as he gently and powerful changes the world.

After all, as William Hazlitt says, “A gentle word, a kind look, a good-natured smile can work wonders and accomplish miracles.”

One of my favorite television memories growing up was Bob Keeshan, known to millions of my generation as Captain Kangaroo. Despite the tricks of Bunny Rabbit and the thousands of ping pong balls that fell on his head, he always remained gentle, serving as a role model for how we as children should live.

“It requires more strength to be gentle,” he writes, “so it's the everyday encounters of life that I think we've prepared children for and prepared them to be good to other people and to consider other people.”

It is true. It requires more strength to be gentle when someone makes us mad or hurts us. But because of Jesus, we do it. Because it is the higher quality, we do it. Because it is about love more than hate, we do it.

Find the keys of gentleness. Think gentle thoughts. Practice them. See what doors they open. And know the savior who makes them possible.

“Let the gentle bush dig its root deep and spread upward to split the boulder.” ~ Carl Sandburg