

We Need a Little Nuance

There is a great need in the world today to be able to see the point of view of others, and to speak in moderate tones in a world which sometimes seems to have gone mad. People in political or religious circles are particularly guilty of this, but everyone practices this sin of extremity at one time or another.

The song, “we need a little Christmas” could have a little tweak for this purpose to say that “we need a little nuance”. A nuance is a subtle difference in meaning or opinion or attitude.

Our Congress at the present time, in fact all three legislative branches of our government, seem to be insisting on their own way at the expense of the other. How did we get so fractured? Maybe because we don’t take seriously God’s command to do unto others as we would have them do unto us. Maybe because we think it really is “do unto others before they do unto us”.

I Corinthians 13 says that love does not insist on its own way. But we do. We insist on our own way, knowing full well that that makes us people who try to be their own Gods, and pretend to know everything.

It didn’t work out so well for Adam and Eve. It won’t for us either.

Faith is all about forgiveness, kindness, love, and grace. We know right from wrong, but we must not hurt others by trying to prove that we are right.

We must find this nuance, which I tend to want to call kindness, in everything we do and say. In everyday conversations, communications, and ways of communicating with others, up to and including electronic devices. It is very hard to read how a person may be feeling in a text message or email. Many times, we get it totally wrong, opposite of what the writer intended.

“People have entire relationships via text message” says writer Danielle Steel, “but I am not partial to texting. I need context, nuance and the warmth and tone that can only come from a human voice. “

The Christmas song continues, “we need a little Christmas right this very minute.” We need a little nuance, right this very minute as well. We must not delay. Our very civilization depends on how we treat other people.

David Dark, a Christian who taught high school English for a number of years, and now teaches at the Tennessee Prison for Women and is a religion professor at Belmont University, understands, writes, and practices nuance for the Christian.

“I want very badly,” he says “to challenge the ease with which we succumb to the false divide of labels, that moment in which our empathy gives out and we refuse to respond openhandedly or even curiously to see people with whom we differ. As I see it, to refuse the possibility of finding

another person interesting, complex and as complicated as oneself is a form of violence. At bottom, this is a refusal of nuance, and I wish to posit that nuance is sacred. To call it sacred is to value it so highly that we find it fitting to somehow set it apart as something to which we're forever committed. Nuance refuses to envision others degradingly, denying them the content of their own experience, and talks us down tenderly from the false ledges we've put ourselves on. When we take it on as a sacred obligation, nuance also delivers us out of the deadly habit of cutting people out of our own imaginations. This opens us up to the possibility of at least occasionally finding one another beautiful, the possibility of communion. [...] It could be that there's no communion without [nuance].”

It is necessary to explain a little more who David Dark is. Eugene Peterson, one of the translators of the Bible, writes of David Dark this way.

“David Dark is my favorite critic of the people’s culture of America and the Christian faith. He brings a deep sense of reverence to every book he reads, every song he hears, every movie he sees, but it is a discerning reverence---attentive to truth and Jesus wherever he comes on them. He is also a reliable lie detector.”

So let us as Christians, as citizens, as parents, and as friends, learn the Christian form of nuance. Let us recognize that there are other points of view, and hold fast to our faith while at the same time seeking to understand others.

As we enter the New Year, we indeed need a little nuance, right this very minute. We must love with the divine love God through Jesus Christ gives us, and seek to bring Christians and the world together before we destroy one another.

The golden rule, the forgiveness option, the power of love. They are all gifts of God for this world, and a harbinger of the next.