

*Only kindness that raises its head
From the crowd of the world to say
It is I you have been looking for,
And then goes with you everywhere
Like a shadow or a friend.*

3. As you discuss the importance of kindness and mercy, keep the mission challenge in mind: Discuss briefly each of these five groups of people below and what challenges they would have when facing the world?

- a) Homeless Person out on the street or in a shelter
- b) A Mother with kids without money to pay for food and heat at the same time
- c) A foster care child whose parents weren't able to care for them
- d) Seniors without any family members – living in a facility that has been in lock down for 14 months – isolated from any human connections
- e) An adult who is not able to read a street sign, a job application, a book to their child.

After discussing each of these briefly, decide on one group above that all of you feel more passionate about. There's no right or wrong answer. But whichever group you pick, think about ways you could help strengthen a person or group in this situation by something you could do for them. This lent, make a decision in your small group to do something for this group of people in need. If you need help with ways you can make your plan happen, contact Julie Walker at jwalker@kirkinthehills.org. Here at the Kirk, we work with homeless shelters, help distribute food to families with food insecurities, help supply needed items to foster care kids, distribute care packages to seniors, and we're connecting people to a program to help with adult literacy.

4. Spend some time sharing prayer requests and praying for each other.



Small Groups – Sermon Notes Week of March 14, 2021

Acts 9:1-19

The Conversion of Saul

Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' He asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' The reply came, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.' The men who were travelling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, 'Ananias.' He answered, 'Here I am, Lord.' The Lord said to him, 'Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight.' But Ananias answered, 'Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name.' But the Lord said to him, 'Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.' So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.' And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

Fill in the blanks

- 1 The summer is _____ season, and _____ regularly ask: “If this is _____ season, why can’t we _____?”
- 2 He was the _____ in Jerusalem where he was _____ in his attempted shutdown of the _____ movement and even presided over the _____ of _____.
- 3 His unnamed companions should’ve _____ him, how were they to know that Saul would not somehow _____ them?
- 4 Anger is _____.
- 5 There is so much _____ that comes when you let go of the _____ of holding _____.

General Questions:

1. What stood out to you in the sermon?
2. What is something new you didn’t know before?
3. Is there a question that the sermon prompted for/in you?
4. How do you feel called to respond to the sermon?

Discussion Questions

1. Pastor Nate says, “NPR reported a “Massive 1-Year Rise In Homicide Rates Collided With The Pandemic In 2020” offering that “At the end of 2020, Chicago police reported a jump of more than 50%, Los Angeles saw a 30% increase, New York City had 40% more than the previous year.” We are turning on each other...One reporter writes, “The trifecta of the pandemic, required social isolation and social unrest has driven many of us to more extreme behavior and worries, including paranoia.”” Do you think this is true?

One of the theologians, Eric Barreto, says this: ““The Way” is a powerful metaphor for Christian identity. Instead of being identified by a set of beliefs, these faithful communities were known by their character in the world. Christian faith was a way of life and one that impelled individuals and communities to leave the safe confines of home and church to walk on the road God had set out. “The Way” suggests that faith is a living, active way of life.” Lift up examples of how the people of “The Way” are living out different lives that contradict NPR’s report.

What “safe confines” have you left to follow Jesus? Do you have a “Damascus road” story where you were on a wrong road but had a dramatic change of heart that put you on the road to God? What was the light that shed truth upon your life? How did you change? Please share!

2. Pastor Nate says, “anger is fear’s bodyguard. If we lash out with anger on our faces, in our meetings, with our keyboards, at our families, then we don’t have to face the fear we have—that someone or something is going to turn on us.” How do you think this was true in Paul’s life? Discuss how this is true in our world and in your life today.
3. A pastor, Jamie McCallum says, “Then, there is Ananias. Despite legitimate concerns about Saul’s past, he simply does as the Lord commands. Unlike the

others who could not hear or see Christ on the Damascus Road, Ananias hears the voice of the Lord on his own. And he knows just who is speaking! There is a unique familiarity in his reaction to the voice, indicating Ananias has heard that voice before. Just as he spoke on the road to Damascus, and just as he spoke in the home of Ananias, our God still speaks.” How familiar are you with the voice of God? Do you often miss it altogether? What would you have done if you were Ananias? Discuss what God’s voice sounds like in your life.

Beyond Questions

1. Pastor Nate says, “There is so much relief that comes when you let go of the burden of holding another down.” What burden do you need to let go of today? Share how you will let go of that burden this week.

Who are the merciful and kind people in your life who have been there for you even when you didn’t deserve it—even while risking their own safety? Name and thank them this week by texting, calling or sending them a card.

2. Discuss this poem by Naomi Shihab Nye:

Kindness

*Before you know what kindness really is
You must lose things,
Fee the future dissolve in a moment
Like salt in a weakened broth.
What you held in your hand,
What you counted and carefully saved,
All this must go so you know
How desolate the landscape can be
Between the regions of kindness.
How you ride and ride
Thinking the bus will never stop,
The passengers eating maize and chicken
will stare out the window forever.*

*Before you learn the tender gravity of kindness
You must travel where the Indian in a white poncho
Lies dead by the side of the road.
You must see how this could be you,
How he too was someone
Who journeyed the night with plans
And the simple breath that kept him alive.*

*Before you know kindness as the deepest thing inside,
You must know sorrow as the other deepest thing.
You must wake up with sorrow.
You must speak to it till your voice
Catches the thread of all sorrows
And you see the size of the cloth.
Then it is only kindness that makes sense anymore,
Only kindness that ties your shoes
And sends you out into the day to gape at bread,*

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