

Be Kind In All You Do

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Based on the short story "The Three Questions" by Leo Tolstoy:
<http://www.online-literature.com/tolstoy/2736/>

This morning's story is at least 100 years old. Leo Tolstoy made some good points about kindness. He said that now is the time we have, that we should pay attention to the person in front of us, and that doing good deeds is our purpose as human beings. Our second Principle, worded as, "Be kind in all you do" in the song, is one way of translating that. I think the lines about helping each other learn and taking care of the earth are also related to our mission to do good deeds.

There are some aspects to Tolstoy's three ideas that a person could easily miss. I'm going to mention two of those, and then come back to one of his original points. First, it's important to be prepared to pay attention and to do good deeds. In the story, the Queen had given some thought as to what a person should do in an emergency. She knew something about first aid. She also had practiced asking for help during an emergency so that people standing around could be part of the team instead of crowding the person who needed the most help. Our friend Julie Brown is teaching CPR classes. CPR isn't quite the same as first aid, but that's another way we can prepare ourselves to be helpful. Does anyone have other ideas about how we can get ready to pay attention to the people around us, or ways we can get ready to be helpful to people or the planet?

Another idea that I want to make sure we remember about today's story is that, while we should give our attention to the person in front of us, we also have to make choices about the people we spend time with. It is easy to accidentally spend all of our time with people who are like us, and to focus our helping energy on people who are like us because they are the people we know. In the story, the Queen got out of her usual routine and her usual environment, and she learned things and met friends she never would have in the palace. Even if we don't have a chance to meet other people, we can read books and listen to music to help us understand the experience of people whose lives are different from our own. Where might we pay attention to people around us?

One of the original ideas from this morning's story is that now, this very moment, is the only time in which we have any power. We cannot change the past. Harboring resentment about decisions already made does not change anything. It is good to apologize for mistakes, yet wallowing in regret makes it difficult to use some of our

energy to make amends or to make better choices next time. Our power to change the future rests in the choices we make in the present. We support and encourage one another to spiritual growth, and help each other make the best choices we can in this very moment. Let's pay attention to the beauty of the here and now, and to the people who we are journeying beside on this path.

If there is an opportunity to do justice, love mercy, and humbly join someone on a journey of compassion, this is the moment we have to use the gift of that opportunity. There is a time for kindness, and that time is now.

So be it. Blessed be. Amen.