

Sunday Morning Service Starring Messiah Youth
Colossians 3:12-17
April 19, 2020
Messiah Youth

Guest 1. Jake Winters (as himself)

Sebastian: For our first guest, today, we have Jake Winters, Messiah Youth, member of Teen Team (go team). Jake is a Junior at Wayzata High School, plays trombone in the band and marching band, and is a member of the National Honor Society.

Jake, I understand you've got a bit of scripture you'd like to share with us today?

Jake: Hey, thanks Sebastian. It's great to be here. I *do* want to start our time together today with a scripture story. As we decided to focus on kindness for Youth Sunday, I thought this was a good word to share.

It's from Colossians 3, verses 12-17:

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Sebastian: That is a good word, Jake. How do you see this in your day-to-day life?

Jake: Well, I see it in the way we treat each other – my friends are all pretty kind and patient with each other.

Sebastian: Yeah, yeah that's good. I see this a lot when we go on mission trips and to STORM Camp.

Jake: Oh for sure. I think a major part of what we do at STORM Camp and on mission trips is "putting on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience." When we come alongside organizations or individuals we don't know and help them, get to know them – and we're working alongside people we probably don't always know very well either. Kindness is kind of central to all of it, when we're serving Jesus by serving others. It's a life-changing experience, really.

Sebastian: I agree, Jake. I think I've been working on practicing kindness and really patience during this quarantine – learning a new way of interacting with others. Are you finding that, too?

Jake: Yeah, I've enjoyed that we can still get together on Wednesday nights – and that Teen Team is still leading within Messiah Youth through all this. I've been learning to be

patient with my family, and practicing kindness and compassion when I'm working at Hy-Vee. You know, I've heard the phrase, "We all do better when we all do better" – and I think that's so true during this time – at home with family, at work as an essential employee, staying home to keep yourself and others safe.

Sebastian: Yeah, practicing compassion, kindness, and humility in real-time.

Jake: Yeah

Sebastian: Well, Jake, it's been great having you on the show today, thanks for your time. We'll see you online on Wednesday at Digital Youth Group!

Jake: Thanks, Sebastian!

Sebastian: Great guy. Great guy.

Guest 2. "Professor" Miah Sandvik

Sebastian: Well our next guest, Professor Miah Sandvik, is going to share about kindness from a different vantage point. Welcome, Professor.

Miah: Well, hello, I'm so thankful to be here today to talk about Kindness as one of the fruits of the Spirit. Fascinating stuff for sure!

You see, if we are the vine, and God is the branches, and we remain in God's love, we will bear good fruit. And that fruit is the fruit of the spirit. I've been studying fruit for decades and never have I seen more impressive fruit than the fruit of the spirit!

Sebastian: Just to catch our viewers up – the fruits of the spirit are...

Miah: The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Sebastian: I recall a puppet show teaching me that in a singalong...

[Video Fruits of the Spirit from Youth Sunday 2017]

Sebastian: Man, that video is ridiculous every. time. So, kindness is a fruit of the spirit?

Miah: Yes! Yes! And the fascinating thing about the fruits of the spirit is that, just like any growing thing, is that it's supported or hindered by what's growing alongside it. Kindness, supported by goodness and patience on either side – that's a recipe for healthy fruit. Throw in a little strawberry-rhubarb and you've got a great pie. But without goodness, without patience, without gentleness, kindness falls flat. Dries out. Shrivels up. Kindness does not grow alone. It grows among the other fruits, and just like any other vine-based plant, has a built-in support among itself.

Sebastian: How do we make sure that we've got this vine-based infrastructure?

Miah: Well, I'm no cardiologist, but it does have to do with the heart. A heart that loves God and loves others. A healthy heart is fueled by the fruits of the spirit, and the fruits of the spirit are nurtured by a healthy heart. The two are intrinsically connected, like a grapevine! A grapevine is more than a fancy dance move *laughs and snorts* a grapevine has deep roots and a trunk, just like any other tree, but it's tendrils grow around fences and trellises – the health of the fruit is dependent on the nutrients of the soil and the roots and the trunk, but also on the tendrils, which reach out and connect with other things.

Sebastian: So, in laymen's terms, you're saying that if we stay rooted and grounded in Christ, our efforts to extend kindness, goodness, patience to others will be strengthened. But in our efforts to be kind, good, and patient will also strengthen our relationship with God?

Miah: Exactly!

Sebastian: Well, thank you Professor Miah, for that horticulture Bible lesson this morning. I feel like I should make a fruit pizza or something.

Guest 3. Cassandra Hultgren (as herself)

Sebastian: Well, since we're all quarantined here together, I thought our final guest today could be my sister, Cassandra Hultgren. She's also a member of Teen Team (go team), a senior at Wayzata High School, part of the drama department, and [name of] choir. She's recently decided she'll be headed to Luther College in the fall. Ladies and gentlemen, welcome my sister Cassandra Hultgren.

Cassandra: Thanks for having me, Sebastian

Sebastian: Didn't have much of a choice, but we're glad you're here.

Cassandra: I volunteered when we started planning this in January!

Sebastian: Anyway, we're talking about kindness today. What lessons have you learned about kindness in your faith journey?

Cassandra: Well, I think we've learned today that kindness – and love – are really things you practice when you love God and love people.

This past month and a half, the Middle Schoolers have been in the book of Deuteronomy, specifically learning about the Shema, which we've talked about at STORM Camp a few years ago, too -

"Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God. The Lord is one. And as for you, you shall Love the Lord your God with all of your Heart, with all of your Soul, and with all of your Strength."

And what the middle schoolers have learned is that the translations for heart, soul, and strength really mean that we're supposed to Love got with everything we've got –

With our heart – or levav - which controls our emotions, our intellect, and our will

With our soul – or nephesh - which is your whole life, your whole physical *being*

And your strength – or me'od – which is translated to "muchness"

So, when we're to love God with all we are, and then Jesus says the other greatest commandment is like it – to love your neighbor as yourself

Sebastian: So, we're supposed to love – in peace and gentleness and kindness – with everything we've got.

Cassandra: Yeah, to Love God and Love others requires us to be tuned in to this. With all our being.

Sebastian: How do you practice that?

Cassandra: I love to sing. I love to use my voice to praise Jesus. And singing – that takes my whole being – my heart and soul and strength – so I see it like, you know, I need the right posture to sing well – I need to pay attention to my physical presence – and I need air – and we talked about the breath of God in youth group a few weeks ago – and then I need to focus on what I'm doing – I need to sing the notes, read the words, be in tune with what's going on – our lives are no different – we need to be tuned into what loving God and being kind to others *feels like* in our presence, our posture, our breath, our focus – it all works together.

Sebastian: Yeah. It really does. Well, thanks for sharing today, Cassandra. We really do appreciate it. Thank you.

Grow, Pray, Study for the Week of April 19, 2020

Weekly Prayer: Holy Spirit, I want to love as you love. I want to experience joy in whatever life brings my way. I want to experience peace that passes understanding. I want you in the center of my life. Help me to do my part by making choices that make me receptive to your presence in me. Thank you that I can trust you to do your part and bear fruit in my life. Amen.

Monday, April 20

Scripture: 1 Timothy 1:12-16

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength because he considered me faithful. So he appointed me to ministry even though I used to speak against him, attack his people, and I was proud. But I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and without faith. Our Lord's favor poured all over me along with the faithfulness and love that are in Christ Jesus. This saying is reliable and deserves full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"—and I'm the biggest sinner of all. But this is why I was shown mercy, so that Christ Jesus could show his endless patience to me first of all. So I'm an example for those who are going to believe in him for eternal life.

Observation: The traits from the Youth Sunday worship are called "the fruit of the Spirit." These traits reflect the character of the God who grows them in us. The apostle Paul looked back on the days when, as an angry young man named Saul, he had proudly persecuted and killed Christians (Acts 7:57-8:1, 9:1-2). Toward him, he said, Christ had displayed his "immense patience."

Application: The God we read about in the Bible seldom hurries. In fact, God often seems slow to our impatient humanity: "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish" (2 Peter 3:9). In what ways have you found God's patience frustrating especially during these days of Stay Home MN? In what ways has it been a blessing to you?

Prayer: Gracious God, during these days of waiting and staying put, may I feel your presence with me. As you are patient with me and my shortcomings, may I also be patient with those closest to me. Amen.

Tuesday, April 21

Scripture: Ephesians 4:1-6

Therefore, as a prisoner for the Lord, I encourage you to live as people worthy of the call you received from God. Conduct yourselves with all humility, gentleness, and patience. Accept each other with love, and make an effort to preserve the unity of the Spirit with the peace that ties you together. You are one body and one spirit, just as God also called you in one hope. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all, who is over all, through all, and in all.

Observation: Methodist scholar Maxie Dunnam wrote of the key word “therefore,” “Paul has told that story of grace—the drama of salvation—and now can say ‘therefore.’ It is after we know that ‘by grace [we] have been saved’ (2:5) that we can be ‘worthy of our calling’ ... Our being and doing as Christians are expressions of what God in Christ has been and done for us.”

Application: In what big or small ways do you sense impatience hurting you, physically and mentally? Faced with a child’s energy, an elderly person’s slow pace, or a red light that lasts “too long,” how can you allow the Holy Spirit to grow the fruit of patience in you?

Prayer: God, thank you for the amazing gift of patience that you offer to all your children. Slow me down, Lord, so that my life may honor and bless you. May my being and doing be expressions of what Christ has been and done for me in my life. Amen.

Wednesday, April 22

Scripture: Ephesians 2:1-7

At one time you were like a dead person because of the things you did wrong and your offenses against God. You used to live like people of this world. You followed the rule of a destructive spiritual power. This is the spirit of disobedience to God’s will that is now at work in persons whose lives are characterized by disobedience. At one time you were like those persons. All of you used to do whatever felt good and whatever you thought you wanted so that you were children headed for punishment just like everyone else. However, God is rich in mercy. He brought us to life with Christ while we were dead as a result of those things that we did wrong. He did this because of the great love that he has for us. You are saved by God’s grace! And God raised us up and seated us in the heavens with Christ Jesus. God did this to show future generations the greatness of his grace by the goodness that God has shown us in Christ Jesus.

Observation: The Greek word for kindness suggests ‘usefulness’ and ‘employment.’ It is not a word that simply communicates sentiment, but one that emphasizes utility. God’s kindness is not just “nice feelings.” It’s active, supremely so when Jesus gave himself on the cross.

Application: Jesus said when we love our enemies, and bless those who curse us, then “[we] will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful” (Luke 6:35-36). As a child, did you see God mainly as kind and merciful, or angry and punitive? What helps you trust God’s kindness now?

Prayer: Loving God, my prayer for today is that I may I find real and life-changing ways in which to bless others in my life today. Whether it is a family member, a neighbor or perhaps even a total stranger. Open my heart and my eyes that I may I extend your gracious love to them today. Amen.

Thursday, April 23

Scripture: Matthew 20:1-16

“The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. After he agreed with the workers to pay them a denarion, he sent them into his vineyard. “Then he went out around nine in the morning and saw others standing around the marketplace doing nothing. He said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and I’ll pay you whatever is right.’ And they went. “Again around noon and then at three in the afternoon, he did the same thing. Around five in the afternoon he went and found others standing around, and he said to them, ‘Why are you just standing around here doing nothing all day long?’ “‘Because nobody has hired us,’ they replied. “He responded, ‘You also go into the vineyard.’ “When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, ‘Call the workers and give them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and moving on finally to the first.’ When those who were hired at five in the afternoon came, each one received a denarion. Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more. But each of them also received a denarion. When they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, ‘These who were hired last worked one hour, and they received the same pay as we did even though we had to work the whole day in the hot sun.’ “But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I did you no wrong. Didn’t I agree to pay you a denarion? Take what belongs to you and go. I want to give to this one who was hired last the same as I give to you. Don’t I have the right to do what I want with what belongs to me? Or are you resentful because I’m generous?’ So those who are last will be first. And those who are first will be last.”

Observation: Many Bible translations use “goodness” (as in Galatians 5:22) for the Greek word *agathos*. That’s not wrong, but Matthew also used the word in this story for the master’s generous pay plan. Even today, if we say “You’re so good to me,” we usually, in some way, mean “generous.” Our only “deserving” of eternal life comes from God’s generous goodness, God’s great love for us.

Application: Does the master’s way of paying the workers in this story feel unfair to you? It was not unfair, of course. No one was underpaid; it was just that some received ‘unreasonable’ generosity. That is what the kingdom of heaven is like. In 2 Corinthians 5:21, Paul said Christ was treated as we deserved, and we are treated as he deserved. In what ways does that “unfair” exchange draw your heart toward Christ?

Prayer: Gracious God, I am grateful for all that you have given to me. And so, in response, may my eyes always be open, seeking ways in which I may express this same unreasonable generosity to others. Amen.

Friday, April 24

Scripture: Lamentations 3:17-26

I've rejected peace; I've forgotten what is good.

I thought: My future is gone, as well as my hope from the LORD.

The memory of my suffering and homelessness is bitterness and poison.

I can't help but remember and am depressed.

I call all this to mind—therefore, I will wait.

Certainly the faithful love of the LORD hasn't ended; certainly God's compassion isn't through!

They are renewed every morning. Great is your faithfulness.

I think: The LORD is my portion! Therefore, I'll wait for him.

The LORD is good to those who hope in him, to the person who seeks him.

It's good to wait in silence for the LORD's deliverance.

Observation: This passage came from Jerusalem after Babylon's army tore down its walls, the Temple and most of its homes in 587 BC. Amid that wreckage (think of Ground Zero in September, 2001) the writer of Lamentations voiced gritty trust in God's faithfulness: "I have hope...great is your faithfulness." In these days of the COVID-19 Pandemic, we too can count on God's faithfulness.

Application: It is in times like these of crushing pain, disappointment and loss, that we are tempted to give up faith in God. It's all too human to think, "How could a good God let this happen?" But as our passage says, it's precisely when all hope seems gone that God is our source of ultimate hope. What does "God's faithfulness" mean to you (since it clearly doesn't mean God shields us from all pain)? When was it hardest for you to hold onto hope?

Prayer: Lord, help me to hear you saying, "I am your hope" over all other voices clamoring in the world today. I am running to you with both hands outstretched and grasping for you. Fill me with hope and give me a tangible reminder that you are with me always. Amen.

Saturday, April 25

Scripture: Galatians 5:1, 13-14, 22-23

Christ has set us free for freedom. Therefore, stand firm and don't submit to the bondage of slavery again.

You were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only don't let this freedom be an opportunity to indulge your selfish impulses, but serve each other through love. All the Law has been fulfilled in a single statement: Love your neighbor as yourself.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against things like this.

Observation: God's call to a life of freedom was the spacious frame in which the apostle set the picture of the fruit of the Spirit. We could respond to that call by saying things like, "I've just got to be more loving" or "I have to get a handle on self-control." But that just turns this into one more heavy burden of guilt for us to carry. The fruit of the Holy

Spirit brings us not more burdens, but freedom to live fully, because “against such things there is no law.”

Application: Recall once more the fruits of the Spirit: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” In what ways have you seen one or more of these traits bring you greater freedom as the Spirit grows it in your life? What steps do you want to take during this time of social distancing to cultivate the soil of your life so that the Spirit’s fruit can grow more deeply, and bring you even more God-given freedom?

Prayer: God, I put my hope in you. May the fruits of your spirit grow in me so that my life is a blessing to you and others as I live my life fully and freely as your beloved child. Amen.