

Sermon: Spokane Friends Church – June 16, 2024

My Father's Kindness

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Colossians 3:1-14

Judy Woodruff Interview with Daniel Lubetsky:

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/brief/234550/daniel-lubetzky>

TED Talk with Daniel Lubetsky: <https://www.pbs.org/video/daniel-lubetzky-founder-chief-executive-of-kind-llc-cr19hk/>

Jon and I are old enough to have grown children now, with children of their *own*, and we often wonder what they think about us as parents... oh what tales they must tell their kids! “When we were kids...” You can only imagine the things they remember! Some of those stories they tell are ones Jon and I have long forgotten. Others are old favorites. But there are some old family stories I’m not sure we’ve ever shared.

Today is Father’s Day – a day filled with meaning and perhaps mourning. We celebrate this day with our fathers, or in remembrance of our dads who have passed away. My heart is especially near Shawn and Mike McConaughy today as they celebrate and grieve for their dad, Roy, who pastored us when we first moved to Spokane in 1985. Some of us also struggle with a day to celebrate fathers, when we never knew our own. Some of us are ready to celebrate! This day, like so many others is full of the wideness of grace that carries us through both joy and sorrows. Always, I wish you all God’s blessing and presence in this day and all those to come.

I’ve been waiting to share this story with you for a few weeks – it’s one I heard in an interview that captivated me.

Daniel Lubetsky is the founder and CEO of the snack company KIND... the businessman who gave us all the KIND bar... the nutritious, delicious bar we find in the snack food aisle with the bold capital letters K-I-N-D on the label. He’s a very busy guy, traveling all over the world, and discovered that he needed something nutritious that he could grab while running through airports, flying from one place to the next. Candies, chips, were not healthy. So, he figured out something that was. But... that’s not the most important part of the story. Nutritious? Delicious? Maybe. Most important? No.

It's Daniel Lubetsky's *dad!* Daniel discovered an amazing story about his dad that changed his life. Here's what he said in the interview: "My dad had this incredible *kindness* that oozed through every part of his body. He had the ability to look at life positively in spite of what he went through. He was a Holocaust survivor. When he was 15-1/2 years old, he was liberated from the Dachau Concentration Camp by American soldiers who risked a lot to save people they had never met. He would make sure to not just remind us about *the horrible stuff* he went through, but also about how people rose up... there was a German soldier who, when people were not watching, threw a potato by my dad's feet. It never was lost on him that he was living on borrowed time *and that he lived because of the kindness of others.*"

A father's story – a *human* story – became an inspiration for Daniel's life, and it has changed many lives. KIND bars are sold all over the place, and Daniel named them in honor of his father's kindness. He remembered his father's story. The one he'd heard from childhood. The one where someone who was *not supposed* to be kind, *was* kind. The one where his dad *could* have been bitter all his life but instead lived his life '*in a positive way*', exuding kindness.

Here [CBS interview] Daniel reminds us all of just how far an act of kindness can go: "One of the magical things about kindness is that it's what we need to call a happiness aggregator. People confuse kindness with being nice. And they're very different. You can be nice and be passive. But kindness requires *action*."

When I applied to law school, I wrote on my application that I wanted to do two things. One was to solve antitrust law irregularities and problems, and the second was to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict. And my advisor came to me and he's like, "Do you think you might want to just choose one?"

I ended up trying to create something called Peace Works, which until today, still exists. It's a business, to bring neighbors and conflict regions together and help use the power of business to shatter cultural stereotypes. As I was doing my research late at night, I went to a store on Gordon Street and I bought this obscure looking jar of sun-dried tomato spread. And I downed the jar. I went back to the store to buy some more. And they didn't have any more.

I started looking for that product. Something was telling me that *that* product would be a conduit to actually turn the theory from college and law school into practice. And it ended up leading into the first product line of Peace Works, where we would buy the sundried tomatoes from Turkey instead of buying them from

Italy, the glass jars from Egypt instead of buying them from Portugal. And we buy olives and olive oil from Palestinian farmers. And it was Israelis that were making them. And then that's how Peace Works got off the ground... [*PeaceWorks was my first attempt to transform 'us versus them' into a constructive framework to help neighbors--former enemies--advance common goals...* from his TED Talk]

I think the best way to discover the humanity of other beings is just to meet them. In my experience, it's much harder for you to have absolute hatred for any human being when you interact with them, when you have that human connection.

We won't know what our interactions with others will mean. Unexpected kindness can change a person's life... it can literally mean *life*. Daniel's father had many stories of Dachau, but he made sure to tell that one story of an enemy's kindness, and it changed his son's life. What do the stories of our lives tell? What did the stories of Christ's life tell?

- The accusers would stone the woman, and Jesus said... "He who is without sin, cast the first stone."
- The disciples would send the children away, but Jesus said, "Let the children come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Lovingkindness isn't easy. It costs. Just ask Jesus about that. This kind of life requires courage and action. It means risk, interaction – not isolation. Lubetsky calls it the mindset of a "builder" rather than a destroyer - someone who "takes action to unite, to create, and to bring light to the world," rather than a "destroyer," someone who "takes action to divide, demolish and diminish." Daniel sounds a lot like Jesus to me.

Paul asks us in Colossians 3, "Why do you live as if you still belonged to the world?" He reminds us that we've chosen to follow Christ. Our lives are "hidden with Christ in God... there is no longer 'them and us'; but Christ is all, and is **in** all!" Our lives are to be 'clothed' with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness.

We are not Jesus. But we are filled with Christ's light. And it is in that Light that we are able to live and love and act. What stories do we remember? What stories do we choose to dwell on? Which ones do we choose to tell? Do we discover new stories to share? Do we celebrate new experiences? Do we build new lives of joy, forgiveness, creativity, grace, kindness? God help us as we choose the stories we live into.