
People Are Kind

People are kind.

Let me interrupt the program. Let me gently interrupt our anxieties and illnesses, let me interrupt our sheer exasperation with this pandemic, with a special notice: People are kind.

It seems like the journey we have now walked for almost two years is never ending. We've climbed some steep hills looking forward to rest and return, only to see still another mountain in front of us. We've made some turns for the better, only to find ourselves almost exactly where we have already been.

During our walk, we have been hounded, admonished, chastised, scolded, scared, by people who think they have been helping us. Their latest "breaking news" has often been just another opportunity to raise anxiety. The high drama of daily anxiety would have us believe that another world-devastating catastrophe is right around the corner. The screens we watch somehow present people as threats to us.

For the record, I have become a believer in some of the work of Stephen Pinker; in his book, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, he makes the case that, over the long course of history, violence is actually being reduced in human civilization, not getting worse. It may be that, over time, other things are getting better, too. Individual cases can be horrible, for sure. But, over time and as a whole, human civilization is progressing towards the better. The ubiquity of available news accounts would have us believe that catastrophe is everywhere; but the true odds are, it is not.

People are kind.

So, last Saturday, I took another kind of walk. I escaped the world of "breaking news" and the latest anxiety tweet. I went for a walk in one of Atlanta's great parks, this one along the Chattahoochee River. I knew covid cases were rising and that I had to be free from exposure as I led church services on the following day. There were others with me out there, perhaps with similar desires; let's get some fresh air without infecting anyone!

On my walk, I saw kind people, pure and simple. We were all so different out there! Me, a seasoned white man. A Black couple, with two scrambling children. An Asian guy jogging. An Hispanic family on a picnic. A group of college guys playing some new kind of game in the field (roundnet? spike ball?). An old couple meandering and taking their time. A cool bicycle guy. Lots of people, of all shapes and colors and sizes, walking their dogs, who were also of all shapes and colors and sizes. I was walking in love.

"Hey," I said softly, as we passed each other in the woods. "Nice day," replied the guy with a huge German shepherd. I wondered if I would have been so fear-free if it were dark and we were in some city alley. But we weren't. I saw young lovers enjoying each other, without a care. They smiled at my smile.

Last Saturday, people were being patient. They were not threatening each other. People were being real, in person, next to each other. Moving to the side to let others pass. Returning errant soccer balls. Letting children squeal. They were walking in love. To a soul, every person I encountered that day was kind. To a soul.

Friends, I have something to tell you. We are going to make it. People are kind.



The Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler

Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip

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