



Wednesday, February 6, 2019

6:30pm

St. Mary's  
Episcopal  
Church



**L**oving our neighbors is difficult, especially when the people around us do not share our race, religion or culture. Christians are challenged to find ways to help neighbors in need, show kindness, and make connections.

**O**n a highway outside of Washington, D.C., a white man stopped to help a black man with a flat tire. This action by a "Good Samaritan" might not have made the news, except for the fact that the person in need was retired Gen. Colin L. Powell. The challenge of loving our neighbors across the lines of race, age, culture and religion will be the topics this evening. Please read the opposite side for more information.

**W**hat questions might this incident raise?

1. What risks did Anthony Maggert take to assist Colin Powell? When have you taken a risk to help a neighbor in need?
2. "Let's stop screaming at each other," wrote Powell. "Let's just take care of each other." Where do you see people screaming at each other today, instead of taking care of each other? What factors make it easier to scream than to help?
3. Some people find it difficult to assist a stranger of another generation, race, religion or culture, while others don't. What might be some reasons for each?
4. Where do you see concrete examples of people showing kindness and making connections with people unlike themselves?
5. What message do we send the world when we love our neighbors as ourselves? How does this make the Christian faith attractive to others?



Do you believe  
"kindness is contagious"?  
If so, why?



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A middle-aged white man was driving on the Capital Beltway. An older black man was on the side of the road, trying to fix a flat front tire. The driver, Anthony Maggert, immediately thought that he recognized the man who was stranded: retired Gen. Colin L. Powell.

"But no," Maggert thought, "it couldn't be. Out here, on the side of the road?"

Thinking that he ought to help the stranded driver whether he was the general or not, Maggert pulled over and walked toward the man on his prosthetic leg. Discovering that he was right, he said, "You're Gen. Colin Powell." The man replied, "Yes, I am."

At that point, 42-year-old Maggert realized that he was in the presence of one of his favorite leaders. According to *The Washington Post*, Maggert had read all of Powell's books, and he had watched him on television and been impressed by Powell's grace under pressure. And when he joined the military and served 23 years, Powell became a role model for him. When Maggert served three tours in Iraq and two tours in Afghanistan, losing his leg to a flesh-eating bacteria, he found himself thinking often about Powell.

Maggert got out the lug wrench and began to help Powell with his tire. The two of them chatted about Afghanistan as they worked together. "Such a gentleman," Maggert said of 81-year-old Powell, who had gone from military service to work as U.S. Secretary of State. After the wheel was fixed, Powell left for an exam at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, and Maggert went on his way.

The encounter lasted just a few minutes, with one man helping another. "Why not?" said Maggert to *Fox and Friends*. "Why not take just a second out of your day to just help somebody else out?"

But the act of neighborly assistance stood in stark contrast to the acrimony being felt in Washington just a few miles away, with the federal government partially closed, politicians battling along partisan lines, and pundits on television shouting at each other.

While some might say that Maggert was a "Good Samaritan" to Powell, others would argue that such a label should be applied only to helpers who cross religious or cultural lines to provide assistance.

Both of these men served in the U.S. military, and Maggert was a big admirer of the general before their encounter.

Still, Maggert crossed generational and racial lines in order to be a good neighbor to Powell in a time of need.

After helping with the tire, Maggert wrote Powell a message, calling him "an inspiration, a leader and statesman." Powell responded in a public Facebook post: "Thanks, Anthony. You touched my soul and reminded me about what this country is all about and why it is so great. Let's stop screaming at each other. Let's just take care of each other. You made my day."

## Confronting the News With Sme Scripture:

**T**hose who despise their neighbors are sinners, but happy are those who are kind to the poor. (Proverbs 14:21)

The book of Proverbs is a collection of wise sayings about how to live the good life. Some of the sayings include positive examples, such as "A faithful witness does not lie," while others describe the consequences of bad behavior, "The house of the wicked is destroyed." Other sayings judge people "who despise their neighbors," and predict happiness for "those who are kind to the poor."

### Questions:

- Why is it a sin to despise your neighbors?
- Have you ever found happiness in helping others, especially in being kind to the poor?

**A** lawyer asked Jesus: "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Matthew 22:36-39)

After entering Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, Jesus is put to the test by religious leaders called the Sadducees and the Pharisees. After the Sadducees ask him a question about the resurrection, the Pharisees ask him to name the greatest of the commandments in the law. Jesus responds by pointing them to the commandment in Deuteronomy 6:5 to "love the LORD your God," and then to the commandment in Leviticus 19:18 to "love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus concludes by saying, "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (v. 40)



### Questions:

- How do you see all the words of the Mosaic law and the prophets "hanging" on these two love commandments?
- Where do you find the commandment to love to be particularly challenging?

## To Conclude Our Discussion:

1. Paul writes that all the commandments "are summed up in this word, 'Love your neighbor as yourself'" (Romans 13:9). Do you think there are commandments that cannot be summed up in the love commandment? If so, where are they, and what purpose do they serve?

2. In this era of political polarization, how can Christians do a better job of making connections, showing kindness, and caring for others?

Next Wednesday (February 13) is SWEEP Wednesday. There will be no conTEXTS meeting next week. SWEEP will meet in the chapel.

