

6th February 2023

Kindness

**"Shall we make a new rule of life from tonight:
always to try to be a little kinder than is necessary?"**

J M Barrie, *The Little White Bird*

With the proliferation of dogs in our village and the number of people who are out at work during the day, there are several companies which provide Doggie Day Care. It's become an essential service. Clearly, it's good for the sociability of the dog. It creates employment for local entrepreneurs. And it means that the dog-owner has the best of both worlds – having the pleasure of the dog's company when they're at home, and not having to worry about the dog's welfare when they're not.

I love the names of these companies: Carefree Canines; Paws for Thought; Daisy's Dogs; Layzee Bones; Stay Pawsitive; Ulti-Mutt Care. Go on! Have a go at making up a suitable name yourself. And no, don't let me know how creative you've been

I saw a van today emblazoned with "Going the Extra Mile". I wondered if that meant that the dogs in their care got more exercise, or whether their advertising was a bit more philosophical than that. What does the "extra mile" entail? *Very* posh treats for your dog at no extra cost? Ferrying your dog to the vet without complaint? Doing your washing-up when the dog's dropped back in your home? Pet-sitting till after midnight – for free – when you're out on the town?

In Matthew's Gospel, in a collection of Jesus' teaching we now call "The Sermon on the Mount", we find Jesus saying this:

If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles.

Jesus' people were occupied by the Roman Army. A soldier could force you to carry his gear for one mile. You *had* to do it, or you were in trouble. But the soldier couldn't ask you to go further. So why not offer more, Jesus is saying. Take the soldier by surprise. Give more than you have to. Don't just do the minimum, what's expected. What a difference it will make!

I hope that's what that Doggie Day Care company was offering. And you and me? J M Barrie gives us the meaning of Jesus' teaching: A new rule of life from tonight? Always try to be a little kinder than is necessary.

A prayer for today

"A little kindness goes a long way." Maybe I should go a little further to be kind. Amen

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon

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