

ARTICLE FOR GAZETTE

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Ah...June! It means many things. Graduations, weddings, vacations, transitions, STRAWBERRIES. I love strawberries. I remember the Sunday afternoon many years ago when my big brother and I went picking wild strawberries in the forest land owned by my father in Colville, WA. It took us two or three hours to get a half pint of those tiny berries. We brought them home and my mother made them into homemade strawberry ice cream. I can almost taste it now. What a treat!

A few weeks ago as I was looking for a book to read to my soon to be four year old granddaughter, I came across a Cherokee Indian story about how we got the first strawberries. In this story a man and his wife had lived together happily for many years. Then one day the man got angry with his wife because she didn't have dinner ready when he wanted it. She got angry in return and decided to leave him, so she walked away toward the setting sun. Then her husband was sorry, and he wanted her to come back. He went after her, but he couldn't catch up. The sun asked him if he was sorry and he said yes, so the sun took pity on him and shone its beams down strong on the earth. Where the sunbeams touched the earth strawberries appeared like little sparkles of fire among the green leaves. The woman stopped, bent down and tasted one. It tasted so deliciously sweet that it reminded her of how happy she and her husband had been before they got mad at each other. She decided to pick some for her husband. While she was picking, he caught up to her and said he was sorry for being mean and she shared the strawberries with him. So the Cherokees see strawberries as a reminder to be kind to each other.

That reminds me of one of my favorite scriptures, Ephesians, chapter 4, verse 32, that says, "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." When we pause in the midst of our busy lives, when we look around us and see the beauty of God's creation, and let our hearts fill to overflowing with the

goodness of God, how can we not let that goodness go out from us to bless the lives of the people around us. Jesus frequently used examples from nature to demonstrate how we should live. He said we should have the faith of a mustard seed. He said we should trust God to care for us like the lilies of the field and the smallest sparrows do. Seeds must be planted in good ground before they can grow. Seeds have to die in one sense before they can grow to be what they are meant to be in all fullness. A tree is known by its fruit, said Jesus. The fruit of the strawberry must be God's way of speaking to us, saying "Slow down, look, taste and see that the Lord is good!"