

A DEMAND FOR SMILES

Last week Tim Hortons was selling their Smile Cookies for charity. These cookies are always popular when they come on sale. I went into my nearby Tim Hortons one morning to get a coffee. Some of you who read this message will be shocked by that news. One of the changes that the pandemic has had on me is enjoying drinking their coffee once again. When I placed my order for a large coffee the person taking it asked if I wanted to buy a Smile Cookie too. I told her, "If I bought a Smile Cookie without my teenage daughter present, she would be very upset with me." That brought a smile to her face, and she shared how her teenager would respond the exact same way. I did tell her that I would be back after school with my daughter to buy some Smile Cookies.

True to my word dad and daughter enjoyed eating our first Smile Cookies of the week that afternoon. It was interesting to see during the course of the week how much demand there was for Smile Cookies. Several days last week I saw people walking out with a box containing a dozen Smile Cookies. One person I spotted doing this worked at a nearby bank. Another person appeared to be a teacher. She carried out several boxes of Smile Cookies, so I assumed her students were going to be smiling when she gave them out. There were plenty of Smile Cookies available to be purchased the first few days last week.

By Friday I began to notice there were fewer of them in the trays behind the counter to purchase. On Sunday my daughter and her friend tried to get some when they stopped into a Tim Hortons while shopping but discovered they were all sold out. When she told me about this, I decided to go over to my nearby Tim Hortons to see if I could surprise my daughter and her friend with Smile Cookies while they were watching a movie downstairs in our house. I could not surprise them as they were sold out at this location too. It would seem there was a high demand and desire for smiles last week, even if they were on the front of a cookie.

It is always nice and uplifting to see a smile. I remember one person from my congregation who would always smile at me just before I started the service. I would smile back and found these interactions a comforting way to begin.

This person has now gone to be with the Lord, but I still remember her smile and how it blessed me. I find smiles to be very revealing about people. A smile can tell us whether a person:

- is having a good day,
- is friendly and approachable,
- has a sense of humour,
- is glad to see us,
- is enjoying a particular moment.

Having to wear masks through COVID hid many people's smiles. Now that these restrictions concerning masking have been lifted, I have been looking forward to seeing people smile again. Sometimes I see those smiles from others, and other times I do not. Wouldn't it be a blessing to see more and more people smiling again? Wouldn't it also be a blessing for us to be smiling more often? We would begin to see this happen more often in our world if we would just remember to start each day off by asking God for this blessing:

May the Lord bless you and protect you. May the Lord smile on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord show you his favor and give you his peace (Numbers 6:24-26).

A blessing like this was meant to ask for God's divine favor to rest upon others. There are five parts in this ancient blessing that conveyed hope God would:

1. Bless and protect them,
2. Smile on them and be pleased,
3. Be gracious, merciful, and compassionate,
4. Show His favor toward them and give them His approval,
5. Grant them peace.

By asking God to bestow this blessing upon others we will be demonstrating our love, encouragement, and care for them. We will certainly begin to see more people smiling in our world when they experience being blessed in these ways. After we pray for God to bless others, we can then ask Him to do the same for us. We too will find ourselves smiling more often as a result of being blessed in these ways by God. I think this ancient blessing is a prayer

that we need to be praying every day so we can bring more smiles to others and ourselves.

I experienced such a blessing on Friday. After taking my mother for groceries I decided to go into the drive through to get my morning coffee. I ordered my usual coffee and also a Smile Cookie because I was still debating at that time if I would use the smile as part of my story time in my on-line church service that I would be filming later that morning. I realized quickly I made a mistake by going into the drive through instead of just parking and buying my coffee inside. The drive through was not moving quickly and as a result I was not smiling very much while waiting in my car.

When it came time for me to get to the window, I was handed my coffee and Smile Cookie and told that the person ahead of me had just paid for my order. When I realized that I had just been blessed by the kindness and generosity of the customer ahead of me, my frustration quickly subsided, and it was replaced with a smile. I then reciprocated the kindness which also brought my smile back. Smiles begin to happen when we ask God for His blessing on others and ourselves.

Smile cookies are no longer for sale at Tim Hortons this week. Let's make sure we keep our smiles by remembering to seek God's blessings each day on us and others.

Keep safe and God bless,

Pastor Dean