

A LITTLE TRASH TALK

Mondays are our garbage pickup day where I live. On Monday, December 6th the wind was particularly strong when I put my garbage out at the curb. I happened to look out my front window later that morning and noticed that my neighbour's trash container had blown into the middle of the road. It belonged to my neighbour who is the Montreal Canadiens fan that I have talked about before. He was working from home that day and I thought about calling him but decided to do the neighbourly thing and get my shoes on to retrieve it.

As I began walking down my driveway to get it, he happened to come out his front door at the very same time. Usually, a Leafs fan and a Canadiens fan would fight over who could lift the Stanley Cup. Here we were heading toward a trash container to see who could get to it first. When he saw me, my neighbour asked, "Were you going to get my trash container for me?" I said to him, "Of course, Leafs fans are used to taking trash from Canadiens fans!" As he got his container, and I picked up my recycling bins I reminded him how this year Canadiens fans are in no position to trash talk the Leafs. We talked a bit more about hockey before we each went back into our homes.

The winds were still strong around noon that same day. As I was walking my dog in front of this neighbour's house, he yelled out his door to me asking if I would come over and help him. The strong winds had blown the tarp off his boat that he stores in the backyard for winter. For the next hour, a Leafs fan and Montreal fan were able to work together to get this tarp back on his boat for the winter. When we were finished, I said to him, "Who would ever think that the trash talk we did this morning would lead to us working so well together this afternoon!" He laughed and replied, "Well you got something else to tell the people at your church!" So now I have told you just as he suggested.

There is a lot of trash talk going on in these days. Unfortunately, it is not the kind that my neighbour and I were doing that Monday morning. The trash talk that I am thinking of is the kind that causes hurt, division, and suffering. The news is filled everyday with stories about people speaking out judging others based on their political views, their looks, their lifestyle, their choices, their skin colour, their religion, their economic status, and so much more. The tone and language that often is being used in these situations is not only of judgement,

but condemnation, belittling, and a lack of love or respect. It amazes me to hear the profanity that is included in all of this trash talk. I may trash talk with my neighbour when it comes to the Leafs-Habs rivalry, but never when it comes to any of these other matters. One of the reasons our trash talk never crosses a line is because I am consciously aware that I have been called to "God talk" rather than trash talk and am doing it to have fun. I think doing more "God talk" might be the answer to help this world to get away from all the negative and degrading trash talk that is occurring and help us instead to start living together better.

A lot of the "God talk" we do during the season of Advent and Christmas has to do with the virtues of hope, peace, joy and love that can be found in Jesus. We might forget that Mary and her relative Elizabeth were the targets of trash talk before the birth of Jesus. For Elizabeth this trash talk would have surrounded her inability to become pregnant during her childbearing years. People would have been talking behind her back saying it was because she was not blessed by God. Mary would have had a lot of people talking trash talk about her too due to the fact she had become pregnant before marrying Joseph.

Despite experiencing this, both Mary and Elizabeth chose to respond with "God talk." They talked about hope and how nothing is impossible with God. They spoke in terms of peace, being fully committed to doing what God was asking of them. They spoke about the joy they were experiencing being blessed by God. Mary and Elizabeth's love for God and love for one another was very much evident as well. They did not let other people's trash talk affect how they lived their lives and viewed each other. Their "God talk" helped them, but has also blessed generations since, including us, as we read their stories each Christmas.

Mary and Elizabeth's stories reveal how we can experience hope, peace, joy, and love even in a society where trash talk is happening. These qualities are in total contrast to what happens when people trash talk others. "God talk" builds people up, gives them hope, brings value and worth to their soul and overall well-being. "God talk" not only affects how we view ourselves, but how we treat others as well. Being conscious of God's desire for us to use "God talk" will stop us from following the trend we are seeing of people judging others and putting them down.

This reminder has helped me with my neighbours and so many others I encounter in life's journey. Despite our differences in the teams we cheer for, or political views, or lifestyle habits, or the importance of faith, my neighbours and others know that I do not condemn nor judge them in any way. They never hear me use words of profanity or judgement but rather language that espouses acceptance and a genuine love and care for them and others. By consistently patterning ``God talk'', it allows me to get along with and work with my neighbours despite our differences. **Wouldn't this world be a better place right now if we did a lot less trash talking, and a lot more "God talking" by accepting, uplifting, encouraging, and helping one another.** We cannot control others from trash talking, but we can control ourselves from doing it. By so doing, we will discover we can get along and work with others despite our differences.

This past weekend we had another strong windstorm come through our area. This past Monday I happened to be going out to my car at the same time my neighbour pulled in. He yelled over at me, "The tarp held up despite the high winds on the weekend." I yelled across, "I am glad. That is what happens when Leafs fans and Canadiens fans get along." After saying this, I got in the car and turned to Nadine and said, "Now I know how I am going to end my mid-week message." This is what happens when you embrace "God talk" as opposed to trash talk. You bless others and God blesses you too.

Keep Safe and God Bless –

Pastor Dean