

AHEAD OF PLANS

We were blessed last week with some unseasonable weather. The warm weather allowed us to get a head start on many outdoor activities. I took full advantage of this gift last week. I started by picking up the limbs and branches that had come down during the winter in our front and backyard. Next, I focused on the leaves. I was able to get all of the leaves cleaned up that gather under my carport during winter. I then focused on cleaning up the leaves that congregate in our pool area. After purchasing a few more leaf bags I started raking up under some of the bushes in our yard. I even made it to our front flower bed and got it raked.

With the raking done I noticed a few weeds beginning to pop up in my grass so I found my trusty digger in the shed and got my hands and knees a bit dirty attacking the weeds before they get the better of my lawn. I even found time to put away my snow shovels hoping I was not being premature in doing so. I am never this far ahead at this point of time when it comes to the outdoor work. I would say I am a good month ahead of schedule right now. It feels good to be so ahead of schedule.

I imagine many of us were taking advantage of the beautiful weather this past week to do many of the same things. There are quite a few things for us to do around our places as we transition out of winter into spring. Getting a head-start on those plans either allows us to add to what we hope to get done, or gives us more time later on to enjoy spring and summer. As I was thinking about being ahead with my outdoor work it got me wondering if I am ahead when it comes to God's desires and plans for me.

Coming out of Easter we have been reminded that it has always been God's plan for us to choose to have a relationship with Him. He opened up the way for this relationship to happen by having His Son die on the cross for our sins so that we would no longer be separated from Him. Scripture makes it very clear that the way for us to experience God's plan is to put our belief in Jesus and make Him our Saviour. Once we choose to do this, God adds to this plan by wanting us to develop some of the same character traits that we see in Jesus. God helps us in developing these qualities by having the Holy Spirit live within our hearts. We find out in **Galatians 5:22-23** some of the character traits that God desires for us to develop:

But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control.

We should be honoured and humbled by God's desire to want these wonderful attributes to be part of our character and nature. Jesus commented we can only develop these fruits by remaining in Him:

**"Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing."
(John 15:5)**

The apostle Paul adds in **Galatians 5** that we must allow our daily lives to be controlled by the Spirit's guidance and prompting to develop these fruits in our lives:

Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives.

If it is our desire to develop these fruits and attributes, then we have to be willing to remain in Jesus and let our lives be led by the Spirit. In order to do this, we must have:

- a desire and willingness to hear the Spirit's promptings,
- a willingness to obey God's Word,
- a sensitivity to be able to discern between our feelings and the Spirit's promptings.

If we live each day controlled and guided by the Holy Spirit then over time we will begin to see the words of Christ guide our thoughts, see the love of Christ influence our actions, and see the power of Christ prevent us from giving in to any selfish desires. Having been reminded about God's plan for us and the help He provides for us to develop these attributes through the Holy Spirit, the question I think we should ponder is:

Are we ahead of things when it comes to developing the attributes that God desires for us?

When it comes to plans, sometimes we are ahead of schedule, right on schedule, or behind. It is no different when it comes to God's plans for us. I think this is a good question for us to spend some time considering coming out of Easter. We were reminded through Easter how our passions and desires that are part of our sinful nature were nailed to the cross and crucified there. Now is the time for us to get **focusing on God's plan for us** to become more like Jesus in our character and ways. If after considering this question we feel we are on schedule or even a bit ahead, then let's keep allowing ourselves to be led by the Spirit each day. If not, then let's commit this spring to making this part of our list of things to do so that some of these fruits will begin to take root in us.

Spring can be a busy time with so much outdoor work to do. Hopefully we are all a bit ahead of schedule with the beautiful weather we experienced last week. In this season when we tend to focus on the outdoors, let's not forget about the work we still have to do inside our hearts to become more like Jesus.

Keep safe and God bless

Pastor Dean