

LET'S GET BACK TO SHOWING COMPASSION

On Saturday night Nadine saw a story appear on social media about an eight-year-old boy who was missing after swimming at Turkey Point earlier that day. This boy was last seen around 5:30 p.m. when he abandoned his floating raft and began swimming back to shore. Sadly, he did not make it. Once the parents realized their boy was missing a frantic search began. The Norfolk O.P.P. was called to look for the boy. Some people who spotted this story on social media offered their assistance and help as well. Unfortunately, late Sunday, Nadine saw on social media that the boy had indeed drowned trying to swim back to shore.

Saturday night saw some of the good things that can happen from social media when so many people responded by offering help when they saw the story. Sunday night however, reflected some of the bad things we see happening on social media. Several people on social media voiced their opinions judging and criticizing the parents for not watching their son more carefully. Some of these critics showed no care and compassion for what these parents were going through at that moment having lost their son.

My immediate response was empathy and compassion for the parents. I have not lost a child personally, but I was immediately brought back to a moment when my father did. He was married prior to meeting my mother. My dad had a daughter and a son in his first marriage. One weekend after their divorce his ex-wife took the daughter and son along with some friends to the Waterford ponds to swim. Tragedy happened that day when my dad's five-year-old son drowned. His name was Peter. I hope people offered compassion and not judgement back then. I am glad that there was no social media back then where people could have anonymously offered up criticism. Having this happen to my father and half-brother makes me very empathetic to what this family is going through right now.

This eight-year-old boy's drowning is an example of how social media today can bring out both the best and worst in others. We see too much criticism and judging of others happening in society today. What we need to see more of is compassion. Actually, it was this attribute that attracted people to Jesus.

Compassion was not always evident in others back in Jesus' days. The Pharisees and religious leaders were very judgemental of people who were sinners and outcasts. Others in society in those days just kept their distance from people going through suffering. The parable of the Good Samaritan reflects these viewpoints. Even the disciples raised questions about the suffering they saw happening in others. In John 9, when the disciples saw a man who had been blind since birth, they questioned Jesus whether it was a result of this man's sins or his parents.

What stood out about Jesus was His compassion for people who were experiencing suffering in their lives. When one reads through the miracle healings that Jesus did it is easy to focus on Jesus' power. What so many people overlook is that it was Jesus' compassion for what these people were experiencing that resulted in Him using His power to heal them. Whether it was for a demon-possessed man living among tombs, a man or woman with disease, a man blind since birth, or even, in three cases, people who had just experienced the death of a family member, Jesus had true compassion for them. It was His compassion that led Him to use His power over evil spirits, or illness, or death to bring miraculous healings into each of these situations.

Compassion is one of the character traits we see in our Lord and God. Jesus showed this quality in His interaction with others as seen in the Gospels. David came to recognize this same quality in God. This is what David said about God in Psalm 145: 8-9:

The Lord is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. The Lord is good to everyone. He showers compassion on all His creation.

David understood how compassionate God was toward him. God has been very compassionate toward each one of us as well. We are encouraged not just to be recipients of God's compassion, but to show this same quality to others as well. Social media is seeing a rise in people casting judgment on others as opposed to compassion. This pandemic has also seen many people becoming angrier and more judgemental of others. "Cancel Culture" has elements of this behaviour at times also.

While society may be moving with this trend, Christians are not to follow this path. We are called to show God's love and compassion to others. When Jesus did this, the Father's power was on display in miraculous and wonderful ways. Our world today does not need more judgemental behaviour. What is truly needed is more compassion. This quality is something we can and should be offering to people who are hurting and in need. If we offer it, then we are opening the door for God to do miraculous things. I for one think that this world needs more of God's miracles, than society's criticism.

Now you understand why when I learned of the eight-year-old boy's drowning, my heart was filled with compassion and empathy, and not judgement of the parents. My heart grieves for what my father went through all those years ago with Peter, and what this family is experiencing right now with their son. I wish Peter was still alive today. I would have loved to meet him. I would have loved to meet this eight-year-old boy as well. I am comforted knowing both are in Heaven, and God's compassion and unfailing love is with this boy's parents right now. Let us make sure that society's tendency of becoming critical and judgmental of other people does not turn us away from following Christ's example of showing compassion and love.

Keep Safe and God Bless

Pastor Dean