

HE ACTUALLY LISTENED TO ME

There is a colleague of mine in ministry who dresses far more casually than I do when it comes to leading worship. While I still wear a dress shirt and tie each Sunday, this particular minister might be seen wearing a t-shirt and jeans, or a toque, or some other casual dress attire. Every Mothers' Day however, this minister does put on a suit and tie to lead worship in order to please and honour his mother.

After this recent Mothers' Day when I saw that he actually wore a bow tie for the service, I decided to send an e-mail to give him some advice for Fathers' Day. I know that his father is a Toronto Maple Leafs fan. This minister is a New York Islanders fan. So, in the e-mail, that I copied his father on, I encouraged this minister to honour his father on Fathers' Day by preaching while wearing a Toronto Maple Leafs jersey. I reminded the minister how the commandment is not just to honour your mother but your father as well.

The father e-mailed me back and thought it was a great idea. His son however thought it was the craziest idea ever. I went a step further and suggested that he buy a John Tavares Maple Leaf jersey, wear that, and at the end of the service give it to his father as his gift. I thought this might make the minister more comfortable wearing a Leaf jersey since John Tavares used to play for the New York Islanders.

I talked to this minister last Friday on a Presbytery matter and asked him if he was going to wear the Leaf jersey that Sunday for his father. He told me to watch online to see. After church on Sunday, I tuned in to his service online and sure enough there he was wearing a Toronto Maple Leafs jersey to honour his father. In fact, he made mention during the service that a friend gave him the idea. I was impressed that he listened to my idea and followed through.

Later Sunday afternoon it was my time to listen. Coral and I went to Ben Mar Sunday afternoon, as we always do on Fathers' Day, to drive golf balls. We have done this for 5 or 6 years now. We were hitting off a golf tee near somebody who was a very experienced golfer. He took notice of my swing and said, "Do you mind if I offer some advice?" He told me how I was turning my upper body instead of letting my arms do the work.

I listened to his advice, made some alterations, and from that point onward I was hitting the ball consistently straight off the tee somewhere between 150-200 yards. I haven't driven the golf ball that well since 1988. That was the year I got married. Prior to getting married I could drive a golf ball straight off the tee about 250 yards. My golf game deteriorated after I got married. Coincidence? Because I listened to this golfer's advice, I had a really good day at the driving range.

As these two examples from Fathers' Day illustrate, when we listen at times to other people's advice and obey, it can lead to certain blessings. My golf swing certainly improved by listening to that golfer's advice, and the minister honoured and pleased his father by making the effort to wear the Leaf jersey. Personally, I thought he preached with more passion and enthusiasm with the jersey on. In fact, I sent him an e-mail on Sunday suggesting he consider wearing the Leaf jersey more often.

As I considered how pleased I was that this minister listened to my suggestion and took the advice, I began thinking how pleased our Heavenly Father must be when we do this also. One of the passages I touched on last week in my message was the Father's words to Peter and the disciples up on the mountain when Jesus was transfigured. The Father's words were these:

"This is my dearly loved Son. Listen to Him." (Mark 9:7)

What the Father was implying here to Peter was not only to listen, but also follow through by obeying what Jesus, the Son, said. Jesus' half-brother James picked up on this connection between listening and obeying when he wrote this in James 1: 22-25:

But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says, otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.

The disciples might have been pretty good at the listening part, but they were not always consistent in obeying what they heard. Is this your tendency right now in your faith journey? Jesus never made this mistake. He always listened to the Father and obeyed completely. Scripture reveals the many ways the Father blessed the Son because He listened and obeyed. James revealed that the Father would do the same for you too. Blessings always flow when you listen to God's Word and obey it. If listening, but not obeying, tends to be your pattern right now, ponder carefully what James had to say. Look carefully at yourself in the mirror and remember obedience on your part is the best way that you can honour your Father in Heaven. When He sees you listen and obey, imagine God in Heaven smiling and saying, "I am glad you listened to me!"

On Fathers' Day, a minister blessed and honoured his father by listening to and taking my advice to wear a Leafs jersey for that service (some might consider this a miracle). I was blessed that same day by listening to and obeying the advice a golfer gave me at the driving range. Blessings flow when we listen and take the advice from certain people. Blessings always flow when we listen to and obey our Heavenly Father. Let us make sure we are doing both of these things when it comes to our Heavenly Father. We need more blessings, instead of more hardships, from failing to do both.

KEEP SAFE AND GOD BLESS

PASTOR DEAN