

IT HAS BEEN THREE YEARS

It is hard to believe we have arrived at the three-year anniversary of COVID-19 shutting the world down. I can still remember the week before all of this happened. My daughter's basketball team played a tournament in Hamilton the weekend before and won the gold medal.

During that next week we started hearing about more cases of people being infected with COVID. The NBA shut down games and other professional sport leagues were talking about doing the same. We had a basketball practice on the Thursday night and the girls were told to keep conditioned if things shut down as it would probably only be for 2-3 weeks. Little did we know at that time it would be 18 months later before they would play again.

We went to the library on the Saturday and stocked up on as many books as we could in case things did shut down. We were not sure whether to hold a service that Sunday, but decided to go ahead in case it would be the last in-person one for awhile. My memories of the days leading into the lockdown are still very vivid. Every one of us experienced loss and changes to our lives as a result of the pandemic.

I took time on this three-year anniversary to think about some of the losses and changes I experienced. It is funny how one of the changes I began to reflect upon was my view towards toilet paper. Prior to COVID I used to be embarrassed buying toilet paper at the store. Even though it is a necessity, I always worried about running into somebody I knew when buying it. It may seem silly, but I was always conscious of this.

Our view toward toilet paper changed during COVID. It became a highly sought after and prized possession to purchase. My attitude toward this necessity changed as a result of this reality. I was no longer embarrassed when purchasing it, and in fact carried it like a prized possession. I remember running into my neighbour at Shoppers Drug Mart early in the pandemic. I was in line proudly holding up my success in finding toilet paper and encouraging him to hurry to the back of the store and get some before it was all gone. I found it amusing reflecting on how one of the changes I have experienced during these three years is my comfort level toward purchasing toilet paper.

A lot of things have changed for all of us during these past three years. Some of the changes we have experienced are unlike any we have ever seen before.

I think it is important for us to take time to reflect upon the impact these changes have had on us physically, relationally, emotionally, and spiritually. After we take time to reflect upon these changes, I would also encourage us to look ahead to our next three years with this perspective in mind: **HOW CAN I BECOME MORE CHRIST-LIKE IN THE NEXT THREE YEARS?**

As I reflected upon the past three years, I was also reminded of how Jesus' public ministry was for a three-year period. When we read through the four Gospels, we discover the changes and impact Jesus had on people during this time frame. We see story after story about how Jesus healed the sick, forgave sinners, provided for people in need, shared the Good News, and offered people hope. He also showed us through this time frame how to resist giving in to temptation, the importance of finding time to pray to our Heavenly Father, and the need for worship and rest on the Sabbath. He also showed us how to be humble, be a servant, and be in an obedient relationship with the Father. He showed forgiveness from the cross and secured it for us through His death. These were just some of the many changes and impacts Jesus had on others during this three-year time frame.

These past three years of COVID may or may not have helped us to become more Christ-like in our walk with the Lord and with others. If we have found ourselves becoming closer to Jesus during the three years of COVID, let's make sure we stay on this path and become even more Christ-like in our daily lives. If we have noticed the opposite, then let's make the decision to move forward in the next three years committed to walking with the Lord each day and striving to become more Christ-like. If we choose to make this commitment, won't it be interesting in three year's time to reflect and see the positive ways we have grown in our walk with the Lord with His help. COVID may have affected us in some negative ways. Jesus can help us overcome these negative changes and, in the process, assist us in becoming more like Him.

It has been three hard years on all of us. It is not as hard to find toilet paper today as it was early into the pandemic. It is hard at times however to find it on sale. If anyone happens to see me in a store proudly carrying toilet paper now it is because this frugal pastor has found it on sale.

Keep Safe and God Bless

Pastor Dean