

LOVING OUR NEIGHBOUR IS HAPPENING HERE

My neighbour's cat got loose just over a week ago. This cat had been a stray prior to Covid. My neighbour befriended this stray cat who would frequently come into their backyard. At first, they would put food out for it. Once the cat became comfortable with them, they would sit on the back porch and spend time petting it. Finally, after six months of doing this, the cat trusted them enough to come into their home as a pet. This cat adjusted well to its new home over the past few years.

When a garage door was accidentally left open recently, this cat seized the opportunity to sneak out and began roaming the neighbourhood again. My neighbour told me what had happened about 10 days ago. All last week my neighbours have been putting up signs around the area asking people to let them know if they see their missing cat. I have been amazed at the level of neighbourly love I have seen being offered to this couple.

My neighbour two doors down spotted the missing cat three nights in a row in her driveway and contacted this couple each time she saw it. My neighbour directly across the road from me spotted the cat in his yard a few times at 4:00 a.m. before heading off to work. He came and knocked on my neighbour's door to let them know. Several other neighbours have been doing the same thing after spotting the cat in their yards. Our neighbour on the right side of us helped them out by posting a picture of their cat on Facebook in our neighbourhood group to help them try to find it. These sightings provided my neighbours with so much hope knowing their cat was still in the area.

My neighbour stopped in at a pet store last week not far from where I live and told the owner about her missing cat. The owner of the pet store spent a good hour talking with my neighbour about where to look for the cat and agencies out there that actually send volunteers to help search for missing animals. In fact, a few nights ago, a group of people from one of these agencies spent a couple of hours looking for this cat. I have been keeping an eye out as well for their cat every time I am working in my back yard or taking our dog Daisy for a walk around the block. I have also spent time each day checking in with my neighbours to see how they are doing emotionally. As one would expect, there

have been days when their hopes were lifted and others when they were feeling down and discouraged. I have shared with them in my conversations how I have been also praying for them asking for God's help in finding their missing cat.

So much love is being shown right now for my neighbours. Seeing all of this love and support has touched them so much. This outpouring of neighbourly love has reminded me of the obligation we have as believers to be doing this on a daily basis. We find instances in both the Old and New Testaments of our obligation to love our neighbour. When Jesus was questioned by an expert in religious law as to which was the most important of all of the commandments Jesus replied by saying:

You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' (Matthew 22: 37-38)

Jesus reminds us how loving our neighbour is a commandment for us. We may or may not always be faithful in honouring this commandment. Perhaps a way to help us be more intentional in honouring this commandment is to look at something the apostle Paul says about loving our neighbour. In Romans 13:8 he writes:

Owe nothing to anyone - except for your obligation to love one another. If you love your neighbour, you will fulfill the requirements of God's law.

Paul tells believers here that it is our obligation to love our neighbour. In order to understand why loving our neighbour is an obligation for us we need to consider the debt we owe Jesus for the amazing love He showed us by dying on the cross for our sins. Because we are permanently in debt to Him for this love He lavished upon us, the only way we could ever begin to repay Jesus is by fulfilling our obligation to love others. It is with this understanding that Paul points out believers have an obligation to love their neighbour.

Right now, I am seeing so many of my neighbours showing love and concern for this couple who are desperately searching for their missing cat. Sometimes it takes a cause like this in order to bring out this kind of love in each other.

For us as believers it should not take a cause to put loving our neighbours into action. **It is our obligation to make it a part of our daily lives and interactions with whoever we come into contact with.** However, whenever a cause like this does occur in our neighbourhood hopefully, we will also **put the love of God into action** by offering our prayer support and asking Him to give our neighbours hope in these situations. This is one of the gifts I mentioned that I have been able to offer as a neighbour.

God gave this couple a glimmer of hope on Sunday night. Once again their cat appeared at the neighbour's house two doors down. They came over and saw their cat for the first time. They tried to get their cat to come over for some food, but he kept his distance. They did not come home with their cat, but at least they came back with hope having seen him for the first time in 10 days. It may take time for this cat to be ready to come back home. It will be wonderful when this happens. Right now, it is wonderful to see neighbourly love happen in my neighbourhood.

Keep safe and God bless

Pastor Dean