

MY DOG'S WORST DOES NOT ALWAYS BRING OUT THE BEST IN OTHERS

Daisy is no different from any other dog in that when you take her for a walk, she is always guaranteed to do either a number 1 or number 2 or both. I always go prepared on every walk with a number 2 bag in my pocket to pick up after her if it should happen.

On two separate occasions recently, my neighbours from across the street have complained that I didn't do this. I have had these neighbours for eleven years and each of them have dogs just like me. Three weeks ago, Daisy was squatting to do a pee when the neighbour yelled at me and said, "You better have a bag with you if she does her business". On Monday morning this happened again with another neighbour who lives beside the first one who complained. She too yelled at me that I better have a bag with me if Daisy stepped on her lawn.

In the eight years we have had Daisy these neighbours have never made these complaints to me. They would often see me carrying a bag in hand after cleaning up Daisy's business. I am sure I have even waved to them as they passed us in their car, probably lifting the hand with the bag to do so. I've been caught a bit off guard by my neighbour's recent comments. I can't blame their behaviour on the drinking water on the other side of the road as we are on the same system. The more I think about it, I don't believe it is Daisy doing her business that is bringing out the worst in their emotions. I can't help but wonder if the worst year in many of our lives is resulting in the worst coming out in my neighbours' emotions.

This past year of pandemic has been the worst year in many of our lives.

- It was the worst year for the number of deaths especially for those living in long-term care facilities,
- It was the worst year for doctors, nurses and those on the front lines having to deal with the unknown and stress on a daily basis,
- It was the worst year of sales for restaurants and some small businesses,
- It was the worst year for many couples as the stress of lockdown resulted in divorces,
- It was the worst year for many students and teachers having to figure out how to adjust to online learning,
- It was the worst year to be in Grade 8 or 12 and miss out on graduation,

- It was the worst year for many of us emotionally as we dealt with isolation, disappointment, fear and anxiety about getting Covid-19 and how it would impact our lives,
- It has been the worst year physically for some who still have lingering effects from Covid-19 or had surgeries and other medical appointments cancelled.

The list of worsts could keep going on and on as Covid-19 has made this a year we will never forget. Sometimes experiencing the worst can bring out the worst in us as seen with my neighbours' response to Daisy's worst. Has this worst year brought out the worst in you at times? For instance:

- Have you found your anger getting worse?
- Have you found yourself becoming more critical of others?
- Have you become more skeptical about the good in others?
- Have you become a bit more bitter towards God?
- Have you noticed old, sinful habits creeping back into your life?

A question we need to carefully ask ourselves after a year of pandemic living is whether this worst year has brought out the worst or best in us. An observation that people are sharing on Facebook is they have noticed so many people having less patience, compassion, sympathy and understanding of others as a result of this long, drawn-out pandemic. As Christians we need to be careful not to let the worst in others or the worst of the world bring out the worst in us. Jesus set the example for us to respond with our best despite experiencing the worst on the cross.

Crucifixion was the worst form of death ever devised. Jesus not only experienced the worst form of death, but He also endured people's worst behaviours coming out:

- He saw the worst in His disciples when they abandoned Him upon His arrest,
- He saw the worst in Peter who denied Christ three times that night,
- He saw the worst come out in Judas who gave into temptation and betrayed Him,
- He saw the worst come out in the religious leaders in their lies to convict Jesus,
- He saw the worst behaviour come out in the Roman soldiers as they mocked and beat him.

Jesus experienced the worst behaviour of others and the worst form of death but responded with His best by:

- Forgiving them for their sins,
- Dying for our sins,
- Opening a relationship with the father for us,
- And defeating Satan's power of death over us.

Jesus took Satan and the world's worst and responded with His best. As His followers we are called to do the same. It is important for us to respond with our best regardless of whether we experience other people's worst behaviour. This is what I was mindful of when I experienced my neighbours' not so polite comments. Part of me wanted to respond in anger but I bit my tongue, remembered that I am a minister and politely showed them that I was carrying a bag. I didn't let their worst bring out the worst in me nor reflect poorly as a Christian on my love for Him.

The interesting result of doing so is I saw that first neighbour late Monday afternoon as I took Daisy for another walk. This time instead of making a comment he made a big effort to wave to me as he got out of his truck and headed into his house. I smiled and waved back with my bag full of you-know-what in my hand. This may not have happened if I had let his worst bring out my worst. I'm glad I followed Christ's example and gave my best to my neighbour despite his worst.

This is the example Jesus has provided for us through the cross. It is also His **expectation of us** whenever we experience the worst others have to offer— respond with the best that Christ has to offer.

This year of pandemic has at times brought the worst out in others. Let's make sure that it does not bring out our worst. Let us maintain our desire to show them the best of Christ's values and qualities in us.

Keep Safe & God Bless

Pastor Dean

P.S. If you do have a dog, keep a good supply of bags on hand. You might have a neighbour like mine!