

NOTHING SURPRISES ME OF LATE

The house across the street from where my mother lives went up for sale recently. It is just a small brick house with a detached garage and a decent sized backyard. The list price was \$399,000 which I felt was way overpriced knowing what the house was like on the inside. It did not take long for this house to sell. My mom found out it sold for over \$500,000 dollars. When she asked me if I was surprised by how much it went over the asking price, I said to her not really. I have been hearing so many stories lately of homes selling significantly above the asking price.

This was not the only thing that did not surprise me last week. The basketball organization that my daughter's team that I coach is part of informed me that the public and Catholic school boards in Hamilton were making changes about COVID protocols for outside groups like us using their facilities. It did not come as a surprise to me after two months of having practices at these facilities that they have now changed things on us once again.

We also had contractors come to our house this week to look at replacing some rotting wood on the outside of our house. When the contractors checked with the suppliers about the availability of the wood they needed, they were told it would be a special order and be a lot more costly than expected. That news did not come as a surprise to me either as I had been hearing from other contractors about rising costs and the shortage of supplies.

Then my daughter made plans with a bunch of her friends to hang out together for Halloween. Just two hours before they were supposed to get together, she heard news from one of the friends that all plans were now off because the other friends decided not to come. It did not surprise me to hear that the plans were cancelled. It was not the first time this group of friends did that at the last moment.

Then we went out for brunch after the service on Sunday. We placed our order right away. Forty-five minutes later we still did not have our food. We asked the waitress how much longer it would be, and she said probably another 15 minutes. The problem was so many people were ordering Skip the Dishes from this restaurant around the same time. At least 30-40 meals

went out the door via the Skip the Dishes option during the time we waited for our food. It did not surprise me to see this option take priority over the customers actually choosing to dine in the restaurant.

I really was not surprised to see any of these things happen during the past week. It is not that I have become overly cynical, or pessimistic, nor critical of late. Some of these things have just become a reality in these days and times. Options like Skip the Dishes have taken off in popularity especially during COVID because at times the only way we could enjoy food from some of our favorite restaurants was to order take out. Shortages of lumber and other materials for contractors have also become a reality because of COVID. Having to adapt to a school board, or workplace, or the government making changes to their policies surrounding COVID has been a reality for us since this pandemic began. When it came to Coral's friends, it only takes seeing a group of people cancel plans on very short notice two or three times to understand you can expect this to happen often. As these examples show, if we really pay close attention to the things happening around us, we will be able to understand changes or trends that are taking place and not be caught off guard by them. Maybe like me, you have noticed these changes and as a result are not surprised when you see them happen.

One thing we seem to be surprised about when it does happen is to see God answer a prayer. There is a perfect example of this found in Acts 12. Peter was being held in a prison at the time waiting for his trial to take place. A group of Christians were gathered at the home of John Mark's mother praying for Peter the night before his trial. God answered their prayers by having an angel release Peter from the prison. When Peter realized he was free he went to the home where these Christians had gathered to pray. When Peter knocked on the door, a servant girl named Rhoda answered and recognized that it was his voice. She went and told the others that Peter was at the door, but they would not believe her. Despite having prayed, they thought she was out of her mind that Peter could be at the door. These Christians were surprised by the fact God answered their prayers. We should ***never be surprised*** by the fact that **God answers prayers**. Amazed yes, surprised no. If we truly know God and the power of prayer than we should never be surprised when we see Him answer a prayer. If we find ourselves being surprised by God doing this, perhaps we need to pay closer attention to Him,

and what He has done for us in the past when it comes to answered prayer. Then we will come to expect that God enjoys answering our prayers.

I was reminded of this listening to a story the one contractor who was working at our house shared with Nadine and me. He told us how his wife had been diagnosed with stage 4 colon cancer. When it was first diagnosed the doctors told them she would not survive it. They shared with the doctor how they believed in God and would be praying. She went through all the radiation treatments and endured many of the side effects associated with it. Prayers continued to be offered as she went through all of this. After the treatments were over the doctors did tests and told them the cancer was gone. The doctors said they were surprised by what these exams showed. This couple was not surprised, however. They said to the doctors they knew the reason there was no cancer was because God had answered their prayers. Nadine and I were not surprised when we heard this story either. It never surprises us to hear stories of God answering prayers.

Things are changing in our world very quickly right now. Perhaps some of these changes are surprising you, or maybe they do not come as a surprise anymore to you. Let's make sure that we ***keep praying and stay close to God*** because one thing that never changes about Him is **His ability to be the answer and solution to our prayers.**

Keep safe and God bless –

Pastor Dean