

OUR CUP OF SUFFERING

Abba, Father, He cried out. Everything is possible for you. Please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine (Mark 14:36).

The Premier of Ontario announced on Monday the Province's plan for slowly reopening. For our area we were told that we would have to wait until February 16, 2021 for the STAY-AT-HOME order to be lifted. We were also informed that we would have to wait until then to see what colour phase we would be assigned when it came to reopening. The Premier also cautioned us to be prepared that if numbers spike again, he would not hesitate to put the emergency brake on and halt the plans for reopening.

For almost 11 months now this has been our reality. Periods in lockdown, followed by gradual reopening and experiencing a possible lock down again. While this type of journey has not been physically challenging or tiring for us, it has been emotionally tiring. Prior to Covid-19 we each had our busy lives, but at least they were predictable for the most part. We had our daily, weekly, and monthly routines. At times, our busyness could make us physically tired, but the predictability kept our emotional well being in balance for the most part. Yes, death, illness, difficult people could play with our emotions at times but COVID has drained our emotions in a different way. Sometimes:

- we have grieved a loss of our normal activities,
- we feel isolated from family, friends, and people who we enjoy experiencing things with,
- we miss the warmth of hugs, handshakes, smiles and personal interactions with others,
- our spirits rise or decline depending on the circumstances of the day,
- we prepare ourselves for the possibility of things getting better or returning to normal but are disappointed when we hear news like vaccines are being delayed and that we will have to keep waiting.

Emotionally, our journey through Covid-19 has been fatiguing at times. This is something Nadine and I talked about as we walked our dog on Monday night. The biggest effect that we are noticing about ourselves this week is how exhausted we are emotionally. The waiting, the anticipating, the disappointments, the learning involved in figuring out things with each stage and how it affects us as a family, and as a church family gets exhausting. Perhaps this has been your observation of your own journey these past 11 months. If so, perhaps a visit to the Garden of Gethsemane can be uplifting for us.

When you read through the Gospels it shares with times when Jesus was physically drained. One such example is Jesus asleep in the boat while the disciples were terrified in a storm. Emotionally, there are few stories where we see Jesus drained. I think part of the reason for this is He always made time each day to go off and pray. The Garden of Gethsemane provides us with an opportunity to see Jesus drained emotionally. As His arrest and death on the cross drew nearer Jesus acknowledged the emotional stress He was experiencing:

My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death.

After sharing this with Peter, James and John, Jesus went deeper into the garden and prayed:

Abba Father, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want Your will to be done, not mine.

It took repeated times in prayer for Jesus to get to the point that He was no longer in anguish emotionally and back into a position of acceptance and peace.

The cup of suffering that Jesus had to hold is different than the one that is in our hands during Covid-19. Just like Jesus, some days our cup of suffering with Covid-19 is hitting us hard emotionally. The advice that Jesus would offer us to get through this time would be to follow His pattern:

1. Every day find time to pray to keep your emotions in a good place.
2. On the days when your emotions are feeling crushed, pray once, pray twice, keep praying until the “My Father” puts your emotions back in a good place.

Prayer worked for Jesus. Just as He encouraged His disciples to pray in the garden, He would be advising us to do the same.

After each announcement you will often hear Premier Ford say, “keep your head up, we will get through this!” As we go through Covid-19 holding our cup of emotional suffering, your pastor’s advice is this:

KEEP PRAYING, GOD WILL GET US THROUGH THIS!

**Keep Safe & God Bless
Pastor Dean**