

WHAT A LITTLE KINDNESS CAN DO

I have shared with you in previous mid-week messages that I have a neighbour who is a Montreal Canadiens fan. I also shared how he did a few unkind things towards me during the hockey season. You may remember when the Montreal Canadiens eliminated the Leafs from the playoffs he sent me a text asking if I had the "Canadian" flu. Then when the Canadiens eliminated Las Vegas to move into the Stanley Cup finals he paraded in front of my house wearing a Habs jersey and hat. These were very unkind things to do on his part. Then again, I wasn't any better when the Leafs were up 3-1 in the series by making a few comments his way. Leaf fans and Canadiens fans don't always make the kindest remarks to one another.

Sadly, we are seeing examples of unkind remarks being made by many of late. We saw several examples of this happening during the recent Olympics. When the Canadian women's rugby team was eliminated from competition a former coach made some unkind remarks about their work ethic. Former US Olympic champion Carl Lewis did the same when it came to the men's 4X100 relay team failing to qualify for the final. He spoke about what an embarrassment it was to the US national program and that he had seen university teams do far better. Former U.S. President Donald Trump made some unkind comments towards the U.S. Women's soccer team when they lost to Canada in the semi finals saying their loss was a result of being more focused on political and societal issues than playing.

These were just some of the unkind things spoken that I was aware of during the Olympics. I am sure there were far more unkind things said than just these three. I have been hearing from others lately that they have been on the receiving end of unkind remarks. I have had several people in my congregation tell me that they have had rude and unkind things said to them by complete strangers at the grocery store when they informed the person they were not following the arrows in the aisles. I had somebody else tell me when they did something similar at another store, the person came up a few minutes later and hit them on their back side. My wife Nadine talked with a teacher recently who shared with her that when she had to take time off during the year for stress leave, she received all kinds of nasty messages from the parents of her students.

Social media is filled with examples of people saying unkind things toward others. It is sad to see so much unkindness happening in our world today. This is not the kind of world that God has envisioned for us. As Christians we are not to participate in this type of unkind behavior. This truth is brought out in so many areas in Scripture including in Paul's letter to the Ephesians. In Chapter Four of this letter, Paul focused on reminding these early Christians how they were to live their lives as "children of the light." In verses 31 and 32 Paul told them:

Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tender hearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

Paul was reminding believers here that because God was kind toward them by forgiving their sins through what Jesus did on the cross, they in turn should show this same attitude and attribute toward others. Paul understood that kindness on our part toward others could go a long way to showing God's love in this world.

A little kindness on our parts can make a huge difference. It takes sacrifice and effort on our part to do so. I was reminded of this recently when a neighbour of ours saw Nadine walking our dog Daisy on a hot day. Normally, this neighbour has a water dish out front of his house for dogs to drink from. He actually was driving away from his house when he saw Nadine and Daisy and realized he had forgotten to refill the water bowl that day. He circled his car around, went back to his house and filled the dish with water so Daisy would be able to enjoy it. He did not have to make that effort and sacrifice, but he did in order to show kindness.

How much better would this world be if we all made the effort to show a little kindness. I know from personal experience kindness helps even rivals to get along. I have been the recipient recently of two acts of kindness from my not-always-so-kind Montreal Canadiens neighbour. A couple of weeks ago my lawn mower gave out on me. I tried to restart it, but to no avail. I did a little research on YouTube about what could be wrong with it and sensed it was nothing major but needed the carburetor pulled off and checked. I don't have the tools or skill set to do this, but I knew my neighbour did. He couldn't look at it right away but he offered for me to use his lawn mower until he could look at it. It was a kind thing for him to do.

Then, Sunday night he texted me to see if I had time that evening for him to check out my lawn mower. Two hockey rivals got together in his shed for the next hour pulling apart my lawnmower to see if we could get it to work again. Sure enough, an hour later I pulled on the cord and my lawn mower fired up again. Two acts of kindness on my neighbour's part to help and bless me. It shows how kindness can help two people who disagree over which is the better hockey team, to get along with one another.

You might be wondering what kind thing I did for him. You are experiencing it right now. He asked me to let my parishioners know of the kind things he did for their Leafs pastor. It seems like he was worried that my fellow Leafs fans might show up in front of his house one day and parade around. I know you are tempted, but out of kindness to him I ask that you do the kind thing and give him a break. Here is my kind deed to him in return. The funny thing about us doing kind things toward each other is I sense he kind of likes me as a neighbour. I kind of like him as a neighbour too, but don't tell him that.

In this world where we are seeing and experiencing so many unkind things being said and done, may we put the effort in to responding with a little kindness.

Keep Safe and God Bless

Pastor Dean