

WHAT LIFE HAS TAKEN FROM US

The regions of Toronto and Peel entered into a second lockdown as of Monday, November 23rd for 28 days. The Tuesday morning newspaper shared the stories of two business owners impacted by the lockdown. The first was the owner of a pub and restaurant. He shared how he invested over \$10,000 to properly protect his staff and patrons from COVID-19. The owner also spoke highly of his landlord who has been patient in regard to the rent. This business owner is so frustrated by the fact that his business has done everything the Province of Ontario has asked with respect to following COVID-19 guidelines and yet has been shut down by this recent decision. He is going to keep trying to stay in business, but this second lockdown is making it difficult.

The other story featured in the newspaper on Tuesday was of the owner of a clothing store in a mall. She too is worried about her business surviving this second lockdown. Her sales are down on average by 80%. The Christmas shopping season is her busiest and most profitable time at her store. Being closed for 28 days leading up to Christmas was heartbreaking for this store owner. She admitted crying for two days after the province announced this shutdown last Friday afternoon. This owner is not sure if her business can survive a second lockdown.

These two business owners' stories are a reminder to us of how this pandemic has taken so much away from us such as:

- The ability to go to sporting events, movies, concerts, or the theatre,
- To go to work or school in the early days of the first lockdown,
- To play certain competitive sports in leagues other than in professional sports,
- To go on summer trips and vacations abroad,
- To have Grade 8, Grade 12, or college and university graduations,
- To have traditional funerals or weddings,
- To go to church and be able to sing and worship the way we like to do.

These are just some of the things this pandemic has taken away from us. The list is extensive and as this second wave continues there may be more things taken away from us as a result. It doesn't seem fair or right that life in a pandemic has taken so many things from us. It is in these times that we need to be reminded about something that Jesus does when life takes things from us - HE RESTORES!

This truth can be found in the story of the first miracle we are told Jesus performed when He turned the water into wine at a wedding in Cana. Mary came to Jesus at some point during the wedding festivities and told Him the wine supply had run out for the guests. Weddings were a 7-day celebration back then. So much planning and detail went into ensuring they did not run out of wine and food for the guests. If this were to happen it would not only be an embarrassment for the bride and groom but also bring shame upon them because this was an honour-based society. We were not told in the story if the reason they ran out of wine was because the guests drank more than expected, or there were more guests than they had planned for. The emphasis was placed instead on what this groom and bride had planned for in wine had now been taken away because of the guests' consumption before the event had concluded.

Jesus set out to RESTORE what had been taken by the guests. He instructed the servants to fill six stone water jars. Each jar could hold 20-30 gallons. After the jars were filled with water, Jesus instructed the servants to get some out and have the wine steward taste it. The steward not only confirmed it was wine but stated it was the best wine he ever tasted. Jesus not only restored the wine but also the bride and groom's dignity and respect before anyone could find out what had happened. If Jesus had not restored the wine before the guests became aware of it, the couple would have lived with that shame the rest of their lives.

This first miracle that Jesus performed reminds us that Jesus does restore for us the things that life can take away. This truth and realization are so important for us to hold onto as we endure the second wave of this pandemic. The first wave took away so much from us and this second one will cause even more things to be taken away including a normal, traditional Christmas. It is natural to grieve the losses we experience from COVID-19 but we don't have to despair or lose hope knowing Jesus is aware of our situation and will restore whatever has been taken away from us.

Let us never lose sight of Jesus in this second wave and the things He does for us like RESTORE what life takes away from us.

Keep safe and God Bless

Pastor Dean