

WHEN TIME STOPPED

Just like every other Toronto Maple Leafs fan, I was excited to stop what I was doing on Thursday night and turn on the Leafs-Canadiens game. I was watching during the first period when Leafs' captain John Tavares fell to the ice after a knee-on-knee hit and then was struck in the head by Corrie Perry's knee. Play stopped at that moment but it seemed so too did time. Watching the replays and then seeing the medical staff being brought out by both teams quickly made us all realize how serious this situation was. Many minutes passed before we eventually saw John Tavares taken off the ice on a stretcher giving everybody the "thumbs up" sign. Because time had stopped for a considerable period after this serious incident, players were allowed to go back on the ice and skate around before play resumed.

Time and play stopped at that moment in the game. Later that same night, time stopped for me again when my Toronto Maple Leafs' watch stopped working. You may recall a few weeks ago I shared with you how my Leafs' watch was falling behind proper time each day. Since then, I just kept resetting my watch each morning to the proper time. I knew the battery would eventually stop and sure enough it happened right after the Leafs lost Game 1 of the series. Coincidence or irony?

Time stopped for me twice, so to speak, last Thursday night. An analogy that might someday be used to describe our experience through this pandemic is "**When Time Stopped!**" It certainly has been a time when so many things have stopped for us. For instance:

- we have had to stop traveling and taking trips
- many have had to stop traveling to the office each day and work from home instead
- we have had to stop going to restaurants and non-essential businesses and order take-out or online instead
- we have had to stop going to church each Sunday and watch online instead
- we have had to stop sending our children to school and have them learn from home online

- we have had to stop having friends and family over to our homes for visits and meals
- kids' sports and activities have had to stop
- we have had to stop coming into close contact with others

"When Time Stopped!" is a fitting analogy to describe what we have been experiencing these past 14 months. There have been moments when we were allowed to do some of these things again. We were able to open the church for in-house worship, and children were able to go back to school. But then, we were informed by the Province of Ontario it was time to stop doing these things again due to rising case numbers. It has been a journey during these past 14 months of having time stopped, restarted, and stopped again.

Some people I have talked to have really enjoyed this **"stop in time"**. For many people, life was very hectic and chaotic for them prior to the pandemic. My neighbour felt this way about her lifestyle. She would leave each morning at 8:00 a.m. to teach at a school, return home about 4:30, and right after supper rush off again to teach karate classes. Some nights she would pull into her driveway at 10:00 p.m. as I was taking Daisy out for her last bathroom trip before going to bed. I talked to my neighbour recently and she said she has appreciated this **"stop in time."** She has enjoyed not having to rush off after supper to teach karate. Instead, she spends time after supper sipping on a coffee and relaxing with her husband. She wants to continue to be able to do this once society begins to reopen and life resumes after the pandemic.

Her story is not unique. Many people I have spoken to have enjoyed this **"stop in time"** brought on by the pandemic. It is now allowing them to do things that they couldn't find the time for before which bring them joy and fulfillment. For some people, this **"stop in time"** has allowed them to draw closer to God and strengthen their faith. It has allowed for some Christians to find more time in a day to pray, to open their Bibles and read, to watch some Christian programming, or to serve the Lord in ways they had not before. This pandemic has blessed some Christians with the opportunity for more time to do these spiritual practices.

When we come out of this pandemic, and the busyness of life resumes, will these same Christians neglect this spiritual time that they have been carving out with God. Sadly, some Christians may fail to keep up with spending time with God that they have been able to carve out during this **"stop in time"**. Hopefully, Jesus' words to Martha will encourage them and us not to make this mistake in our life.

We are all familiar with the story when Jesus and the disciples stayed at the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Martha was busy in the kitchen preparing a meal for her guests while Mary was sitting at the feet of Jesus listening to Him teach. Martha was upset that her sister was not helping her in the kitchen. When Martha asked Jesus to tell Mary to come and help her, this was Jesus' response:

“My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her (Luke 10: 41-42).

One of the lessons Jesus wants us to take away from this story is not to allow the busyness of life to take away from us spending quality time with Him.

This pandemic has been a **"stop in time"** in many ways for us. Hopefully, we have used this **"stop in time"** to find more ways to spend it in the company of Jesus. If you have not taken advantage of this yet, then use this remaining period to do so now before life gets busy again. Once we start the busyness of life again when this pandemic is over, let's make sure we take Jesus' advice to heart and continue to spend quality time with Him each day.

After my Leafs' watch stopped on Thursday night, I took it Saturday afternoon to my jewelry store to get the battery replaced. I told them they better put in a battery that would ensure the Leafs would win on Saturday night. I was glad to see the Leafs win on Saturday night and also that my watch was still working after the victory. My watch is still working, and they won again on Monday and Tuesday nights. Coincidence or irony?

Keep safe and God Bless

Pastor Dean