

## TOOK WHAT WAS MINE

This past Thursday I ordered two large pizzas online from a nearby location because we were having guests over for dinner. When I arrived, I saw my name and order number up on the screen and that it would be ready in 2 minutes. I waited the 2 minutes and when the sign said ready, I approached the counter to pick up my pizzas and pay. The person at the counter went to retrieve my order but came back empty handed. He informed me that somebody had already come in saying they were Dean, paid for the pizzas and left.

Naturally, I asked how that could happen when the sign said upon my arrival that the pizzas would be ready in two minutes. The employee had no explanation for that. The manager came over after hearing what had happened and I explained the predicament I was now in with needing these pizzas for our dinner guests. The manager promised they would make two new pizzas right away, but it would be a 15-minute wait. What more could I do in this situation but wait.

During that time frame a lot of thoughts went through my mind. Naturally I was frustrated that somebody was willing to lie and have no regard for the time and effort I went to in ordering the pizzas in the proper way. I was equally upset that this person did not care if they inconvenienced anyone else by taking an order that was not their own. I was not upset with the pizza place as I have experienced this before at another establishment I have used.

Finally, the 15 minutes of waiting were over. When I went to the counter I pulled out my credit card like I did the first time to pay. I thought they might give me a slight discount as a result of the inconvenience. Instead, because the other person had actually paid for my order before taking them, they viewed these new pizzas as being replacements and I got them free. I have shared in these messages several times how cheap and frugal I am as a Presbyterian pastor. As annoyed and frustrated as I was earlier, I did receive an unexpected blessing even though somebody took what was mine.

As I mentioned, this was not the first time, and I am sure it will not be the last time somebody at a pizza place takes the order that I placed. This incident reminded me how somebody took what was mine even before I was born. Naturally I am referring to how Jesus took my sins to the cross and died for them. The apostle Paul reminded us of how Jesus did this for us when he wrote:

**For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:21)**

I always find it so amazing to think that because of our trust and belief in Christ He took what is ours, namely our sins, and blessed us with His righteousness so that we would be forgiven and experience the assurance and joy of eternal life. Knowing Christ has taken our sins and died for them should leave us with such gratitude for this blessing we have been given.

A question I found myself pondering after this reminder was how we can best show our gratitude to Jesus for taking the punishment for our sinfulness. The answer I was provided with focused on making sure we do not allow certain things to be taken from us that are ours. As evidenced by my experience at the pizza place, we cannot prevent some things from being taken from us. When Jesus took our sins from us, He gave us His righteousness as a blessing. We can prevent anyone from trying to take away the righteous nature Christ has provided us with.

While I was experiencing certain frustrations inside of me after learning of that person taking my pizzas, I did not allow my emotions to take away from responding and behaving in a Christ-like manner toward the staff. In so doing, I hope it showed some of my gratitude toward Jesus for what He did for the likes of me. The other thing we should not let anyone take from us is our faith and devotion to our Lord. We know Satan constantly tries to take this from us by placing various temptations before us. We show our gratitude toward Jesus by resisting each of these temptations and showing how important it is to us to maintain a close relationship with Him.

We live in a world where sometimes people take what is ours. It happened to me when it came to pizza, and I experienced it earlier this summer when somebody took some flowers from my carport that I had purchased that day. I cannot control this, but I can make sure nobody nor nothing takes from me showing my gratitude toward Jesus by remaining Christ-like even in circumstances like this.

**Keep safe and God bless,**

**Pastor Dean**