

A RECENT RECOGNITION

I received an unexpected recognition last week that brought a smile to my face. The recognition was not a result of me reaching the 60-club in age on Tuesday, nor was it for my preaching. Usually, any recognition for my preaching comes if people are still awake by the time I reach the end of the sermon. It should come as no surprise to anyone that the recognition I received last week occurred when I stopped into Tim Hortons.

A new employee was being trained last week, and while she was making my coffee one of the regular employees came over to her and said, "**Make sure you make his coffee properly! He is my favourite customer!**" I appreciated this employee's words and recognition. When I shared this story with a person at church on Sunday, they asked whether it is because I tip her that I have become her favourite customer. When I reminded this person that I am a cheap, frugal, Presbyterian pastor they realized quickly the compliment did not come as a result of me tipping.

I think her acknowledgement is more a result of me showing simple kindness on a regular basis. Every time I see this employee I always try to make the effort to ask her how she is doing and inquire about her family. I have discovered her son plays baseball, so I often ask how his team is doing. When I learned last year that her husband was in an accident, I kept checking in with her on how he was doing. Naturally, I ask her, too, about how she is holding up managing work with a busy home life. These conversations only last a few short moments while she makes my coffee before serving the next customer in line. I also make sure I smile and thank her each time I interact with her. If I had to tip for my coffee at Tim Hortons, there is no way I would be any employee's favorite customer. But showing kindness and compassion on a consistent basis, I believe, has led her to acknowledge me as her favourite customer.

Her words last week meant a lot to me, and they got me thinking quite a bit too. I thought about how many customers this employee would serve during the course of a shift and realized many of them would be regulars just like me. I have not always stood in line behind these regulars and seen how they interacted with this employee, but I am sure they try to be kind toward her too. I began wondering if the difference as to why I have become her favourite has had to do with me showing kindness on a more consistent basis.

It is easy for us to be kind and caring on our good days, but I wondered if these other regular customers have acted the same on their "not so good days"? On our "not so good days" it is easy to take out our frustration and anger on those around us. We can do or say things in these moments that seem so out of character for us. It only takes one such instance of acting out of character in an unkind way to undo all the kindness we have displayed prior. This is why even on my so-called bad days I still show kindness when interacting with employees and people like this person at Tim Hortons.

Acting in this kind and caring manner towards people on a consistent basis should come naturally to us as believers. This is something that Jesus' half brother James talks about in his letter in the Bible. He explains in this letter that if believers truly understand God's ways, it should be reflected in how we are living our lives for Him. In **James 3: 7-18** he explains the character traits that should be seen in us if we are living our lives in an honourable way for the Lord:

But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere. And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness.

James wants believers to know if we truly are embracing God's wisdom it will be reflected in how we are living our lives consistently in these ways. These behaviours are what people need to see and experience from us as believers on a consistent basis. Let's make sure in our interactions with others we show sincere, Christ-like love and kindness on a consistent basis. It will be appreciated by others and come with blessings in return.

The employee's kind words and compliment to me put a smile on my face and made me feel good on the inside. My coffee tasted good too, but that feeling did not last as long as this employee's compliment has. I imagine each one of us will feel the same when our consistent kindness and compassion is acknowledged by somebody in this way.

Keep safe and God bless,

Pastor Dean