

FOCUSING ON MY CUP

Just before I sat down to write this message, I decided to make myself a coffee with my Keurig machine. Even though I stop into Tim Hortons for my morning coffee I still make myself a few coffees through the course of the day with my Keurig. I have to be careful whenever I do this because my mind sometimes becomes distracted while doing so. On more than one occasion I have pressed the button to start the brewing process and forgotten to place a cup underneath. One can imagine the expression on my face when I come to retrieve my coffee but discover instead that the drip tray is overflowing, and the counter is covered with it too. Many might be wondering if I would just get out a straw and start sipping away when this happens, but I prefer my coffee in a cup with two creams and sugars.

On this occasion I did remember to place the cup underneath. While I was waiting for the cup to brew, I began thinking about an incident that happened to me at Tim Hortons last week. There was a new employee on that day, so I gave her my usual order. Instead of a large double-double appearing on the screen, it came up as a small-sized cup. I cannot remember if I have ever ordered a small-sized coffee at Tims. When I brought this to her attention, she attempted to correct it, but the screen showed I wanted not just a small sized cup but a medium one too. She tried to correct this mistake also but this time the screen showed I wanted a small, a medium, and an extra-large-sized cup. The only one missing was the large size I ordered. To put her at ease I said to her, "If I come back home with all four sized cups of coffee, my wife will really think I have a coffee addiction!"

When I sat down at my computer after thinking about these two incidents, naturally my mind was still on cups. It did not take me long to remember the reference that David made to a cup in Psalm 23. In verse 5 of this well known psalm David wrote:

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

In the first four verses of this psalm David uses the imagery of God as a shepherd in order to show how we can trust and depend on Him. Starting in verse 5, David switches to the image of God being a host. In the ancient East,

being a host was taken very seriously. David shows in this verse how God is no ordinary host but rather goes beyond in His care for us. One thing a host would do is prepare a table for their guests in order to provide them with nourishment and rest. David gives us a twist in his description here by revealing that this table is prepared for us with our enemies still around us. We might not envision this as being a very peaceful or pleasant dining experience, but David understood that ***God is bigger and stronger than any of his enemies***, and that He was standing there to keep him safe from any harm.

David next shares how God will anoint us with oil. Hosts would do this for their guests to help refresh them and soothe them after their travels. David also knew shepherds would often anoint their sheep with oil to protect them from bugs and soothe any wounds. David uses this image to share how thoughtful God is as a host by not only feeding us and protecting us, but also healing our wounds and refreshing us. Then David shares that, as our perfect host, God fills our cup not just to the brim, but to the point of overflowing. This is David's way of showing how God blesses us with even more than we need out of His abundant love. ***The imagery from this verse in Psalm 23 shows us how God as our Shepherd or our Host blesses us with His care, and love.*** This is an image I hope we will all be reminded of whenever we pick up a cup to drink from.

A frequent coffee drinker like me will be blessed by this wonderful assurance several times in the course of a day. If I did not have a coffee cup to be reminded of this, but instead had to focus on the Leafs drinking one day from the Stanley Cup for this reminder, I might have to take up shepherding in order to be blessed by the images David provides us with here.

Keep safe and God bless,

Pastor Dean