

KEEPING OUR PROMISES

I had the honour of officiating a wedding this past Saturday. It was an outdoor wedding in the couple's backyard and thankfully the rain stopped just before the ceremony. When my wife and I got married thirty-two years ago we chose to write our own vows. Since becoming a minister, I have never had a couple decide to write their own vows until this last wedding. Most couples have always chosen the traditional vows to make at their wedding.

When it came time for the vows on Saturday, both the bride and groom read their vows to one another from the cue cards they had prepared. Each of them put so much thought into their vows. Naturally, they got very emotional as they read their vows to one another. The words they expressed to one another were personal, heartfelt, meaningful, and touching. I think everybody there was truly touched by the meaningful vows the bride and groom made to each other that day. Marriage vows are very special ones that are made before God and those present at the ceremony and are meant to be kept and honoured by both the husband and wife.

During the past sixteen months, living through this pandemic, perhaps we have made various promises or vows to others. My mother experienced both her 90th and 91st birthdays during this time frame. Many people called her on these birthdays to say as soon as it was safe to do so they would take my mom out for lunch to celebrate her milestone. As we have moved as a Province into Step 2 and now Step 3, some of the people who made this promise to my mom have followed through on their promises. A certain restaurant in St. George seems to be profiting from these people keeping their promise to my mother. Have we made promises or vows to others during this time like these people made to my mother? Have we promised a family member or friend:

- to get back together for weekly coffee chats,
- to celebrate an event with them we were not able to during the pandemic,
- to take them out for lunch or dinner,
- to have them over for a visit?

Or maybe we have made the vow or promise to ourselves that once this is over, we will get back to the gym. Or maybe we vowed not to resume the busy lifestyle we kept up prior to the pandemic. Or maybe we vowed to keep up the time we have been spending with God each day.

As this message encourages us to think back upon some of the promises we made to others and to ourselves during this pandemic, the question that naturally arises is whether we will keep these promises or not. We are not always good at keeping the promises we make. Take for instance the resolutions we make as we approach each New Year. Studies say that fifty per cent of people make a New Year's resolution every year. These same studies say by the time February comes around eighty per cent of those promises are already broken.

Several reasons are given as to why we find it so hard to keep our New Year's resolutions. One reason given is that we are not always emotionally attached and committed to the promises we are making. The other major reason for why so many of us fail to keep these promises is that we feel pressure to make these resolutions at the time. People who tend to keep their New Year's resolutions are usually very passionate about the things they are committing to, or they love someone so much that they do not want to break the promise.

These two reasons may help us to understand why God so faithfully keeps His promises to us. I took a quick glance through my concordance before writing this to see the number of times that I found passages about God's faithfulness. It was interesting to see how this phrase came up so many times in just the Psalms:

Unfailing love and faithfulness.

One of the reasons why God is so faithful when it comes to keeping His promises is He can never lie to us due to being holy. God's faithfulness to us I think goes even deeper than this. I think it also has to do with some of the same reasons why those people who are able to keep their New Year's resolutions are able to do so. God is passionate about us. He loves us so much that He would never want to break a promise He makes to us. Because God is so faithful when it comes to keeping His promises, we not only speak about it, but also sing about it.

**Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father
There is no shadow of turning with Thee
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not
As Thou hast been, Thou forever will be.**

Just as God makes promises to us, we too may have made vows to others and ourselves to do certain things as we come out of this pandemic. This is a perfect time for us to follow God's example when it comes to the promises we have made:

1. Stay true and faithful to our promise,
2. Make it a passion of ours to faithfully keep our promises,
3. To love others and ourselves so much that we do not want to break the promises we have made.

By following God's example, we will not only encourage and bless others, but ourselves as well by fulfilling our promises. We all need this kind of encouragement after everything we have been through during this pandemic.

Keep Safe and God Bless

Pastor Dean