

LEAVES EVERYWHERE

Even though it was the Grey Cup last Sunday, it seemed to me most people were focused on their leaves. When I left my house to drive to church, I spotted one person already out raking their leaves despite the grass still being wet. When I came home around noon, I began to see an increase in this activity going on in my neighbourhood. The neighbour across from me was raking up leaves along his fence line. An hour later I saw a few cars pull into the driveway of a retired couple that lives nearby. Several family members jumped out of their vehicles and raked up all the leaves in front of the house.

By mid-afternoon it was my turn to rake up some remaining leaves on my property. I took my dog Daisy for a walk right afterward and spotted one of my neighbours raking his leaves for the first time all fall. Beside him was a family of four all helping rake the leaves in their front yard. When I turned the corner, I spotted a dad who actually convinced his two teenage children to help him bag up leaves. I wondered if he had bribed or threatened his teenage children in order to get them to help.

As I walked by many of the homes on my usual route with Daisy, I could see by the bags placed at the side of the road that lots of people had already finished their raking for the day. One person's house however caught my attention because of how many leaf bags were sitting curbside. I stopped in front of this house and counted at least 72 bags in total. I had never seen that many leaf bags from just one house waiting for collection. Sunday turned out to be the day when many in my neighbourhood were focusing on their leaves.

I should have spent Sunday night focusing on the Grey Cup but instead I found my mind thinking about the experiences these leaves had from the time they first appeared on the trees until now. I pondered how:

- these leaves endured some of the hottest of days as well as some nights so cool to bring on frost,
- these leaves experienced stretches where there was no rain at all, and other times when there was too much,
- these leaves rustled in the gentlest of breezes but also hung on in the most intense of winds and storms,
- these leaves changed in colour as spring and summer turned into fall.

I reminded myself how all of these leaves now gathered into bags at the side of the road had held on and endured through all of these things as long as they could before falling to the ground.

One would think my mind would have returned to watching the Grey Cup, but I found myself contemplating some of our experiences we share in common with the leaves. I pondered how just like leaves we too cling and hold on during various circumstances and situations in life. I reflected too how we can experience times of plenty or little; times with gentle breezes and others in intense storms; times when things are consistent and others when we face changes. Like these leaves we try to hold on as best as we can during whatever season we are in. I realized however ***unlike them we do not have to experience falling away from our vine and branches as long as we have faith in Jesus.***

One of the ways Jesus identified Himself to us is, "**Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches.**" He then went on to say, "**But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted!**" This insight from Scripture reminds us that we have the choice to keep our faith attached to Jesus, our Vine, by choosing to stay close and connected to Him no matter what we are enduring. By clinging to Jesus as our Vine we will be blessed by receiving His help, strength and wisdom so we will not let go or give up regardless of what season of life we are going through. We may bend a little in life's storms but that is a whole lot better than losing our grip and faith in Christ and being swept away by them.

Sunday was a day where seeing leaves everywhere got me thinking about what we have in Jesus. With most of my leaves raked up I will soon be able to spend more time focusing on the Leafs. I'll let you know if my focus on them helps me to come up with something about Jesus.

Keep safe and God bless,

Pastor Dean