

OUR FAVORITE THINGS

This fall my daughter has been doing a co-op placement through her high school at two of the museums here in Brantford. Much of the work she has been doing for them has involved scanning documents to be archived and updating a book so that it could be republished. Last week she got to do something different on a day when the museum was hosting students on a class field trip.

After arriving, the students were broken up into smaller groups and spent time participating in various activities organized for them. My daughter was assigned to show these students some of the toys that were played with in pioneer times. She was given no script ahead of time of what to say, so she decided to start off by asking each group of students what some of their favorite toys were.

That question was a brilliant discussion starter. Several girls mentioned their favorite toy was their Barbie dolls while many of the boys shared some of the video games they enjoy playing. My daughter used this discussion starter as a bridge to tell how those things were not available back in pioneer times and began showing them some of the toys that were played with back then. My daughter thoroughly enjoyed the experience of interacting with the students there that day and some of them shared with her afterward they liked her activity the best during their visit. I am glad she got that experience, and the museum has booked her for many more school trips that will be held there during the month of December.

When I prayed on Monday morning for an idea for this week's message it was my daughter's experience at the museum that God placed on my heart. I realized the reason why this story was timely for this week is because we are entering another season of Advent and Christmas when we focus on some of our favourite things. Even though some things during this time of year can be stressful, this stretch of time leading up to Christmas is filled with some of our favorite traditions and things to do like:

- getting the Christmas tree up and decorating it with ornaments that carry memories from our past,
- singing Christmas hymns and songs that warm the heart with joy,
- watching our favorite Christmas movies and shows,

- baking and decorating Christmas cookies and enjoying eating them with some warm cocoa afterward,
- gathering with loved ones around the Christmas tree, opening gifts,
- and being at church on Christmas Eve and celebrating the birth of our Savior.

These are just some of the favorite things we enjoy experiencing during this season.

As believers we also take time in this season to remember our favorite gift of Jesus being born into our world to be our Saviour. One way we recognize the gift of Jesus in our life at this time of year is through the Advent candles with the Christ candle at the center and the candles representing hope, peace, joy, and love surrounding it. These four things become special gifts to us as a result of making Jesus the center of our lives.

If the apostle Paul had some input, he might suggest adding another candle to represent the gift of faith. In **1 Corinthians 13**, Paul shared how faith, hope, and love were his three favorite spiritual gifts because they not only helped him in his daily life, but they were lasting as well. His faith in God's Word and promises gave Paul the gift of ***always having a strong foundation to stand upon regardless of the situation*** he found himself in. **Hope** provided Paul the gift of always having a positive outlook that no circumstance was too hard for God to help him overcome. Paul's favorite gift of the three was love because he understood how God's love allowed him to express it outward toward others as opposed to simply inward in a selfish way. Having this understanding of love and being able to express it outward toward others allowed Paul to become Christ-like on the inside.

The gifts of faith, hope, and love were Paul's favorite gifts that not only allowed him to get through each day but helped him to become more Christ-like on the inside. In amongst all of our favorite things to do during this season, let's spend time appreciating these same gifts that God has given to us so that we too will become more Christ-like on the inside. What better gift could we give to ourselves, to others, and to God's Kingdom, too?

Keep safe and God bless,

Pastor Dean