

SPECIAL TREATS TO STILL GIVE OUT NOW THAT HALLOWE'EN IS OVER

Before I started typing this message, I noticed the two boxes of Hallowe'en candy sitting on our kitchen counter to hand out on Tuesday night. I thought I better count the one box of candy to ensure I would have enough because I used some of them in a recent children's story at church but also have snacked on a few Coffee Crisp bars from the box as well. I am glad I counted because 16 chocolate bars are now gone from the box. I think half of them were given to the kids who were part of my story at church so doing the math it means the other 8 ended up in my belly. I rarely eat chocolate bars through the course of a year, but these small sized ones we find at Hallowe'en are too tempting to pass over. As much as I enjoy one of these small sized treats, I enjoy even more giving them out to the kids on Hallowe'en and seeing their smiles and expressions after receiving them.

Counting these chocolate bars reminded me about some other small-sized treats I passed out in the days leading up to Hallowe'en. The small-sized treat I have been handing out quite a bit of late are wrapped as words of encouragement. I have done this twice in the past few days at the Tim Hortons I frequent. The first day I did this I happened to arrive shortly after an irate customer had thrown their coffee at the employee working at the drive-through window. Naturally some of the staff were upset and still talking about this unfortunate incident while I was getting my coffee. I told them how sorry I was for what had happened and how much I appreciate the service they provide me. That got a couple of them smiling and one said, "That is what we like about you. You are always so nice to us!" It was a small treat of encouragement given on my part that turned their frowns back into smiles.

The next day I treated the manager there with words of encouragement, too. I had been waiting at the counter for a few minutes to place my order, but nobody came over to serve me. The manager spotted me and stopped what she was doing to run over and take my order. I thanked her and took the opportunity to say to her, "I have always been impressed by how you manage everything around here!" The biggest smile appeared on her face, and she thanked me for the compliment. It was these two small-sized treats of encouragement I handed out that I was reminded of as I counted the Hallowe'en candy still left in the box on Monday morning.

One of the sad realities that I am aware of when I interact with those who deal with the public is how often they are on the receiving end of complaints and criticism. These kinds of comments can quickly leave them feeling discouraged. There are a lot of "**C's**" being handed out labelled criticism, and there are many "**D's**" being held by those on the receiving end full of disappointment. What comes next in the alphabet after "**C**" and "**D**" is the letter "**E**". There are not "many **E's**" being handed out right now to treat people with the gift of **encouragement**. This is a treat that in **1 Thessalonians 5:11** Paul reminds believers we need to be handing out to others:

So, encourage each other, just as you are doing.

Words of encouragement are meant to build a person up in a positive way. As seen in my examples recently with employees at Tim Hortons, sometimes the best way we can encourage others is to be consistently kind to them and point out a quality we appreciate about them. I saw firsthand in these employees' expressions how a small treat of encouragement turned their days around for them after being on the receiving end of criticism and being disappointed as a result.

I have found that we get treated in return for offering these small gifts of encouragement along the way. This morning, as I stopped in to get a coffee, one employee was extremely busy, but she made an effort to stop what she was doing to smile and wave at me. She treated me with a small gift of encouragement which made the start to my day a better one. After Hallowe'en is over, we may stop handing out small-sized treats, but let's not stop treating people with words of encouragement. It is a treat we are expected to keep on giving as believers.

God bless,

Pastor Dean