

ACHIEVING MILESTONES

I have hit a few milestones of late in my life. As I type this message, it marks the 25-year anniversary of my graduation from divinity school at Knox College. I was invited to attend a brunch this week to reunite with some of my colleagues but unfortunately my schedule did not allow for me to attend. I am sure many of my professors from back then would be surprised that I have lasted 25 years in ministry.

Another milestone I am experiencing currently is enduring another year where I am not able to celebrate the Toronto Maple Leafs winning the Stanley Cup. Many fellow Leaf fans have shared with me lately how they wonder if they will ever see it happen again in their lifetime.

The milestone that has surprised me the most is that I am driving a car that has over 300,000 kilometers on it. We purchased a Toyota Prius hybrid back when my daughter was starting Grade 7. At the time we purchased this vehicle it had approximately 120,000 kilometers on it. Over the years our Prius has had many trips back and forth to Ancaster for basketball practices. It has travelled the highways to Toronto and beyond for basketball tournaments. Then there were the trips taking my daughter to school for Grades 7 and 8, and then to high school for 5 years. Added to that are the kilometers put on by my ministry tasks. Finally, this past year our Prius has made at least two trips per week to London taking my daughter back and forth to university.

A couple of weeks ago the odometer on the Prius was approaching 300,000. I have never had a car in all my years with that many kilometers on it. Usually, I have traded in my vehicles when they approach 180,000 kilometers. The reason why we have kept the Prius all these years is it saves us so much on gas and has cost us very little in repairs. I was not driving the Prius when it crossed the milestone of 300,000 kilometers. At last glance it is now showing 301,940 kilometers. I can't believe this new milestone for me when it comes to one of my vehicles. I used to kid a fellow minister when he was still driving a car that had that many kilometers on it. It would not surprise me if I were still driving this car when it hits the milestone of 350,000 and 400,000 kilometers.

Achieving milestones like I recently have when it comes to years in ministry, or still cheering for the Leafs requires perseverance, and endurance. When I think of this in terms of our Prius it also requires taking proper care of it too. Just as we may achieve certain milestones in areas of our life due to

perseverance, endurance, and taking proper care along the way, the same qualities are needed when it comes to hitting certain milestones with respect to our faith. One of the things the writer of Hebrews was trying to encourage believers to do was to achieve certain milestones and longevity when it came to maintaining their faith in spite of various challenges life may have brought before them. The author commended these believers for persevering and enduring early on in their faith as seen here:

Think back on those early days when you first learned about Christ. Remember how you remained faithful even though it meant terrible suffering. (Hebrews 10:32)

The author also realized it might be hard for these followers to maintain this kind of grip on faith as more challenges came forth. So, the author offered this advice to them:

So do not throw away this confident trust in the Lord. Remember the great reward it brings you! Patient endurance is what you need now, so that you will continue to do God's will. Then you will receive all that He has promised. (Hebrews 10:35-36)

The writer was encouraging believers to be patient in the midst of existing and new challenges they might face by remaining steadfast when it came to their faith and trusting in the Lord. By offering this advice, the author hoped these believers would achieve the milestone of maintaining a strong faith until they were called home by the Lord. Just as these believers needed encouragement to persevere and endure by maintaining a confident and steadfast trust in the Lord, we need this same reminder in the face of our challenges. Because Christ's Spirit lives within us, we can have this kind of endurance. As we continue to trust in Him through life's struggles, we will come to see ***His presence and guidance*** more clearly in our lives.

Just as my Prius needed proper care all these years, may taking proper care of our faith and trust in the Lord help us to keep enduring through the pleasant and not so pleasant roads we are travelling in life. If the Leafs ever achieve the milestone of winning another Stanley Cup, I hope my Prius is still on the road. It would be fitting to drive this milestone in my life to celebrate another one.

Keep safe and God bless,

Pastor Dean