

GIVEN A WARNING

I was provided with a warning last week that has serious implications on my mornings in the near future. When I went in for my morning coffee at Tim Hortons one of the staff that I have come to know warned me that the location would be closing soon for renovations. She told me once the renovations start, I would have to go elsewhere for my morning coffee because they would be closed for the next 18 days.

I appreciated the warning because this upcoming change has serious implications for me. The Tim Hortons that I stop into each morning is just a short distance from my house. Now I am going to have to drive further each day for my favorite morning drink. As I have shared in previous messages, I enjoy the staff and regulars I have come to know at my preferred location. I am going to miss chit-chatting with them and asking how their day is going, and how their family members are doing. It will be so different stopping into another Tim Hortons' location in the mornings.

I appreciate that some of the staff warned me about this change, but I also felt God was behind their actions in sharing this with me ahead of time. The reason why I say this is that ever since I heard the news, I have been taking advantage of the opportunities I still have when I go in to show care toward some of the staff who I know will be adversely affected by this shutdown. I have taken the time to ask a few of the employees what they plan to do during that 18-day period. I have shared with other employees how much I will miss them during that time frame. To a few other employees I have asked how their family members are doing and that I will look forward to hearing updates once the renovations are done at the store. I have just sensed over these past few days that God provided me with this warning not just to help me cope, but also so that I could show care and compassion toward some of the employees affected by this change.

This experience from last week got me reflecting upon how God provides us with warnings about the implications that can result from changes or decisions we make. My reflecting began with recalling how God warned Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden not to eat from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and shared the consequences that would result if they did. Just two chapters later in Genesis, I remembered God warning Cain that sin was crouching at the door eager to control him if he refused to do what is right. My thoughts proceeded next to God warning the people of Noah's time to repent and turn away from their evil ways in order to avoid perishing in the flood that would cover the earth. After reminding myself of these warnings from God in the opening chapters of Genesis, I found my Bible open to Deuteronomy 27 and some of the actions and behaviors God warned the Israelites to stay away from

doing. After reading these, I found myself reminded of the warning Jesus provided to Peter that he would deny His Lord three times that very night. This quick reflection through Scripture reminded me of the consistent theme we see of God providing us with warnings ahead of time in order to help us avoid the consequences that can result from making wrong choices.

These warnings God provides are motivated by His love to help us and bless us. The warning I felt I was provided with by God about the upcoming closure of my preferred Tim Hortons location not only helped me to prepare for this change, but to have me reach out and try and bless some of the staff through kindness and Christ-like care. But we see from the examples I reflected upon in Scripture, not everybody listens to God's warnings, and they suffer adverse consequences as a result. A question we need to ask ourselves at times like this is whether we are recognizing God's warnings toward us and seeing them as an expression of His love? For instance:

- ***When God warns us that our actions are about to lead us to disobey Him, do we listen?***
- ***When God warns us that we are taking our relationship with Him for granted, do we listen or ignore it?***
- ***When God warns us that we are sliding back into some of our old sinful behaviors, do we listen to Him?***

It is important for us also to recognize God's warnings to us about changing situations ahead like my scenario at Tim Hortons. These warnings are God's way of showing us that He is very aware of what is happening in our lives and are an expression of His love and care toward us. Let's make sure we do not let pride set in and ignore God's warnings. If we do, then we may find at some point God sharing these words with us:

I called you so often, but you wouldn't come. I reached out to you, but you paid no attention. You ignored my advice and rejected the corrections I offered. (Proverbs 1:24-25)

Providing us with warnings is one of God's many gifts and expressions of love. Let's make sure we listen and recognize them along the way in life.

Once the renovations start, it is going to be a long 18 days for me not being able to go to my regular Tim Hortons for my morning coffee. God has warned me and prepared me for this adjustment. It's another reminder to me how good God is all the time.

Keep safe and God bless,

Pastor Dean