

HOME COMING

This is "**Homecoming Weekend**" at Western University in London.

"**Homecoming**" is one of the biggest weekends in London each year. The highlight is the football game on Saturday afternoon at Varsity Stadium. Current students and alumni come out in droves for this highlight event. Last year my daughter attended. She did not enjoy the football game but did like trying some of the free food offered at the food trucks outside the stadium.

Besides the football game, returning alumni can attend reunion events hosted by the faculty departments from which they graduated, as well as partake in campus tours, and other ceremonies planned throughout the weekend.

Perhaps the best attended events during "**Homecoming Weekend**" are the outdoor street parties that happen around the university. The London Free Press reported that last year over 18,000 students made their way on Saturday afternoon and evening to one of the streets that hosts these parties. Police put up barricades to restrict traffic, and paramedics are on scene in case there are any incidents.

It is not just Western students who make their way to these street parties. Students from other universities will also travel to London to enjoy some of the partying. Many of the restaurants in London are quite happy when "**Homecoming**" weekend comes around. We took our daughter out to a restaurant on Sunday night for dinner, and the waitress there said they are bringing on additional staff and servers knowing how busy it will be. London will be a very busy place this weekend due to "**Homecoming**."

I graduated from Brock University in 1987 (yes, I am that old), and from Knox College in 2001 (yes, I have been in ministry that long). In all my years I have not returned for a "**Homecoming**" weekend at either of these institutions. I considered it this past May when it came to celebrating my 25th anniversary reunion graduating from Knox College, but previous commitments conflicted with me going. Perhaps some of you who read these messages on a regular basis have attended "**Homecoming**" events. When it comes to church, we usually see "homecomings" happen when a past attender returns for an anniversary service or shows up for a Sunday service when they are back in the area for a visit.

Another "Homecoming" believers will experience will happen when Jesus returns again to bring us back home with Him. The Bible refers to this **"Homecoming"** as the **"Second Coming of Christ."** Jesus shared with the disciples that we do not know exactly when this "Home Coming" will be:

However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not the angels in heaven or the Son Himself. Only the Father knows. (Matthew 24:36)

Even though we do not know the date of this **"Homecoming,"** we are told through a series of parables in **Matthew 25** how we are to live our lives so we are prepared. In the parable of the Ten Bridesmaids (**Matthew 25:1-13**), Jesus reveals how every person is responsible for his or her own spiritual condition and readiness when He does return. We do this by making the decision to put our trust and faith in Him as our Savior. Then in the Parable of the Loaned Money (**Matthew 25:14-30**), Jesus shares how a true reflection of our love and feelings toward Him is revealed in our willingness to use the gifts and talents He has entrusted to us well in our day-to-day living. Finally in the Parable of the Sheep and Goats (**Matthew 25:31-46**), Jesus shares that our desire to serve others in need is also an indicator that we are prepared for His **"Homecoming"** because we are doing these things out of our love for Him. None of these three parables by themselves completely describes our preparation and readiness to be part of His **"Homecoming."** Instead, each one of these parables reveal one part of the complete picture. This is a **"Homecoming"** we do not want to miss out on and will be so blessed and thankful to experience it one day.

As we hear about **"Homecoming"** weekends happening at Western and other universities and colleges in the coming weeks, let's make sure they serve as a reminder to us of our need to keep living our lives in the way Jesus describes for us so that we will be part of His second **"Homecoming."**

As the hymn "When We all Get to Heaven" states, **What a Day of Rejoicing that will be.**

Keep safe and God bless,

Pastor Dean