

IT CAME DOWN

I cannot remember exactly when we purchased an outdoor basketball net and placed it in front of our house, but I do know for sure that we had it before my daughter started Grade 7. That was the year when she tried out for rep basketball for the very first time and made the team. That summer, leading up to her trying out, Coral and I spent a lot of time practicing her layups and shooting at that basket. We continued doing this in the years that followed sharpening her skills for her rep teams and high school seasons. If some of her friends from basketball came over to our house, they could be found out at that basket shooting around and having fun. The basketball net became a fixture in front of our house. Many people coming for a visit knew which driveway to pull into based on seeing the basketball net out front.

This net took a lot of wear over the years. One time a truck hit the rim of the basket causing it to become dented. Sometimes, strong winds would put some pressure on the pole causing it to lean slightly. On a few occasions, branches from the tree overhead would get in the way of us shooting baskets so we would have to cut them away.

I came home from a meeting this past Wednesday and noticed the basketball net was leaning considerably. I did not notice this when I left so my first thought was to wonder whether somebody ran into the net with their vehicle. The tilt of the pole was as if it had been hit with considerable force. I tried to straighten the pole but to no avail. The problem was, whatever struck the pole did damage to one of the braces attached to it.

By Thursday, the basketball net was on a worse tilt than the "Leaning Tower of Pisa." We sent pictures to my daughter who was at university at the time, and she was shocked by what had happened to our net. By Friday, the net had tilted so much that anyone could do a "dunk" on the basket without leaving their feet. For safety reasons I had to take our basketball net down on Saturday. It is now lying in my front yard waiting for some warm weather to arrive so that I can disassemble it. It has been sad to see this familiar landmark standing at the front of our house for at least the past 8 years come down. My daughter, her friends, and I all had a lot of fun and created some good memories shooting at that hoop.

Our basketball net coming down as the season of Advent started got me thinking about how Jesus "came down" to be with us. The Gospel of John starts off by teaching us that Jesus the Word has always existed:

In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. (John 1:1-2)

Then John goes on to explain how Jesus "came down" into the very world He created:

He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. (John 1:10-12)

Advent is a season when we acknowledge that Jesus came down to be with us the first time, and to wait with anticipation for when He will come again as promised. John reminds us here that not everyone recognized Jesus when He came down, and still others rejected Him when He did. As "children of God" I think it is important for us to see how people viewed Jesus the first time He "came down" to ensure we are not "coming down" in any of these or other ways when it comes to our relationship with Him. What I mean by saying this is:

- ***Are we "coming down" in any ways when it comes to our obedience toward Him, or striving to pattern our lives after His?***
- ***Are we "coming down" with respect to the importance He once had in our lives?***
- ***Are we "coming down" by rejecting some of His teachings, and doubting His power and promises?***

Just as our basketball net had to be taken down, sometimes children of God can start "taking down" some aspects of their life with Jesus. In this season of Advent when we look at the gift of Jesus "coming down" to live among us full of unfailing love and faithfulness, let us make sure we are not consciously or subconsciously "taking down" anything when it comes to our relationship with Him that could adversely affect us spiritually or emotionally.

I am not sure as I write this if we will replace that basketball net that brought so many good times and memories to my daughter and me. It was a gift that lasted for a time. Jesus "coming down" however to be our Saviour is a gift that lasts for eternity.

Keep safe and God bless,

Pastor Dean