

KNOWN FOR AT THE FUNERAL HOME

A person I knew passed away a week ago. This person did not attend my church so when I learned of their passing, I did not expect to be asked to officiate at the funeral service. The daughter of the deceased did not want to have the celebration of life last particularly long so when she shared this with the funeral director he said, "Well you won't want the minister you are thinking about to do the service because he tends to be long winded." I guess I do not fall into the category of being "long-winded" because I was the one recommended to do the celebration of life instead. It is a good thing the funeral director did not ask anybody at my church if I am "long- winded" because they may have had a very different opinion on this matter.

This incident from last week reminded me how we come to be known for having certain reputations based on what people might observe while watching us. I have shared in my mid-week messages that at my local Tim Hortons I have the reputation for being a regular, for always ordering a large double-double, and for smiling and being friendly with the staff. At Sobeys, I have developed the reputation with one cashier for being the "discount guy" and "bargain hunter." This cashier is always interested to see what items I need her to apply a discount toward and how much I saved as a result. I also have the reputation for being a die-hard Leaf fan as well. It is a hard reputation to have at this time of year when the Leafs exit the post season way to early. When it comes to my work at the higher levels of my denomination, I have developed a reputation in the eyes of many people, for being very professional and competent in dealing with matters of the courts of the church.

After I finished reflecting upon some of the reputations I have become known for, I began thinking about some that various people in biblical times had. One person that my thoughts began to focus on were the admirable qualities that Ruth exhibited which helped her to develop a good reputation in the eyes of so many. Many people were impressed by the love and devotion she displayed toward her mother-in-law Naomi by accompanying her back to Bethlehem from Moab after the famine had ended. After arriving in Bethlehem, Ruth's hard work each day at gathering grain behind the harvesters did not go unnoticed either. One day Boaz shared with Ruth these words that convey the reputation she had become known for:

"But I also know about everything you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband. I have heard how you left your father and mother, and your own land to live here among complete strangers. May the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge, reward you fully for what you have done. (Ruth 2:11-12)

Ruth had developed a reputation for being hardworking, loving, kind, faithful, and brave. The reason why she maintained such a good reputation was because she displayed these qualities and character traits consistently in the eyes of others.

I think it is important that we take reminders like we are seeing here with Ruth and with me in regard to the funeral home director to consider the reputation we may have in other people's eyes. As believers it is important that ***we are consistent in displaying Christ-like behaviours and attitudes*** so that our reputation is a positive reflection toward others of our love for Christ. Hopefully others are seeing in us the same admirable qualities that people consistently saw in Ruth that came from her love for God.

In case any of you may be wondering, I kept my reputation for not being long-winded when it comes to funeral service. When I finished the service and exited the chapel, I saw the funeral director standing there and said, "I kept it to 30 minutes just as you and the family asked." I sure hope my congregation does not have the same expectation when it comes to my Sunday sermons.

Keep safe and God bless,

Pastor Dean