

MARCH MADNESS PREDICTIONS

This year's March Madness college basketball tournament is now down to its Final Four in both the men's and women's brackets. Before the tournament started, many avid fans filled out their bracket sheets making predictions who they thought would win each game and eventually make it to the championship. My daughter and I were two such fans who did this before the tournament started.

The criteria I used when making my predictions included looking at a team's ranking, their win-loss record during the season, and my impressions if I watched some of their games on television during the season. My daughter used some of the same criteria that I did but there were times when she chose the team I did not in order to make our competition more interesting.

Sixty games have been played on both the men's and women's sides in order to get to the Final Four. After 60 games, my predictions on the men's side have only been accurate 68% of the time. I am doing a lot better at predicting winners in the women's tournament as my predictions have been right 82% of the time. In case you are wondering I am just slightly ahead of my daughter when it comes to our predictions who will win.

March is a time when college basketball fans will make their predictions on the March Madness tournament. Baseball started its regular season last week and many sports commentators were making their predictions about the Toronto Blue Jays chances of making the playoffs again and who might win the World Series this year. With the regular season in hockey drawing closer to an end many fans will soon be making their predictions as to who will win each playoff round and eventually win the Stanley Cup.

This is a time of year when we even see predictions being made about what kind of summer we should expect when it comes to temperatures and weather. When it comes to the predictions we make, the reality is they might turn out to be right or not at all. We make our predictions based on the best information we have at the time but there are so many circumstances beyond our foresight and control that can affect them from coming true.

Somebody who is perfect when it comes to predictions is God. We are reminded of this truth in the stories we just celebrated last week on Good

Friday and Easter Sunday. In the Gospel-writer Luke's telling of what happened when the women arrived at the tomb early that Sunday morning, we are reminded how it was predicted Jesus would arise on the third day:

"Why are you looking among the dead for someone who is alive? He isn't here! He is risen from the dead! Remember what He told you back in Galilee, that the Son must be betrayed into the hands of sinful men and be crucified, and that He would rise again on the third day. (Luke 24:5-7)

This prediction was made even before the events of Jesus' death on the cross played out. When we see predictions like this fulfilled and come true in the Bible, it reminds us how God faithfully keeps His promises. It is important for us to understand that God's predictions are in fact promises that He always keeps. By understanding this truth, it provides us with so much peace and assurance. The apostle Paul understood this when he wrote in Philippians 4: 12-13:

I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.

Paul understood the key to being content and at peace in every situation was to ***rely on God's promises and His power*** to help and strengthen him. As we come out of Easter and continue into this season of predictions being made, may we follow Paul's example here by holding onto the truth that ***God always keeps His promises*** and by so doing we are confident that the strength our risen Lord provides us with will help us through every circumstance.

Just wondering if anyone who reads this is predicting the Leafs will win the Stanley Cup this year?

Keep safe and God bless,

Pastor Dean