

OUR FRIEND IS HERE

I have shared in my messages over the past several weeks about a new employee I have come to know at my local Tim Hortons. I started off by sharing how on his first day of work he was putting his best effort forward opening the doors for customers and cleaning the seating areas thoroughly. I then shared how I engaged him in a conversation on one of my next visits, and when I asked him about his schedule, he ran into the back to take a look at it and realized he had a shift that coming week that he did not know about. I saw this as my way of returning a good deed, after he did one for me by holding the door open the first time we met.

This past Saturday my daughter wrote her last exam at university, and we had to clean out her room in residence and move her back home. We took two cars to London because we knew all of her stuff would not fit into one. She drove back with her mom, but before we left, I promised her I would pick up a coffee at Tim Hortons and have it for her when she arrived home.

When I stopped into Tim's on Saturday night, sure enough, this same employee was working. As soon as he saw me come in, he shouted to his co-worker, "**Our friend is here!**" This was probably only the fourth or fifth time I have interacted with him. I was so touched to think that he called me a friend as opposed to a customer. Just like friends would, we began to engage in conversation. I asked him if he remembered the movies he had stayed up late to watch on a Saturday night a few weeks back. He shared with me some recent television shows he has been binge watching of late. We talked about a television series we have both watched and how we did not enjoy how the last season ended. Finally, we recommended some shows to each other that we should watch.

As our conversation reveals, we did not talk like a customer and employee but rather chatted like two friends talking about various things. The funny thing is neither of us knows the other's last name, nor have we exchanged phone numbers. My friendly approach toward him each time led him to call me "friend." It felt good hearing it and I was quick to share the conversation with my daughter when I arrived home carrying the coffee I promised her.

This conversation got me thinking in the days that followed how wonderful it would have been on that Sunday night when Jesus appeared to His disciples in the upper room after His resurrection if they had said, "**Our friend is here!**" Before Jesus' death on the cross He shared with the disciples that He now referred to them as His friends:

You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. You didn't choose me. I chose you. (John 15: 14-16)

Because Jesus is our Lord and Master, He has every right to call us His servants, but instead He chooses to call us His friends. Jesus made the choice first to be our friend. How comforting and reassuring this should be for us. It is up to us to make the next choice as to whether we have made Him our friend as well. If we choose to be friends with Jesus, we should still show our respect and love for Him by believing what He has told us and showing obedience.

On that night in the upper room after Jesus rose back from death, the disciples did not greet Jesus immediately with the words, "**Our Friend Is Here!**" How heartfelt and touching that would have been for Jesus to hear this from His disciples. It took Jesus speaking to them and showing His scars and wounds from the cross before they recognized it was even Him.

I hope we always see Jesus as our friend and never lose sight of that. Seeing this day in and day out will help us to remember His teachings and be more willing to show our obedience toward Him out of love and respect. Remembering Jesus is our friend may help us also to turn more quickly toward Him in our times of need. Isn't this what we are encouraged to do in this favorite hymn of so many, "**What a Friend We Have In Jesus**"?

**What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry, everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.**

We absolutely do have a friend in Jesus. When we view Him in this way and turn to Him in prayer, I wonder if His response to the angels in His presence is the same the employee shared when I entered on Saturday night, "**Our friend is here!**" Those words made me feel really good upon hearing them. It feels even better to think of Jesus saying them when we come to Him in prayer.

Keep safe and God bless,

Pastor Dean