

OUR GRADUATION

Last Friday I drove to Alvinston to attend the funeral of my dear friend who I shared in my message last week suddenly passed away. Before I left Brantford, I stopped into my usual Tim Hortons to get a coffee for the long journey ahead. I was dressed up in my jacket and tie when I went into Tim Hortons and an employee I have come to know quite well commented on how well I looked. I think she was looking for a tip. She turned to one of her co-workers and said, **“He must be going to someone’s graduation today.”** I smiled hearing that and politely responded that I was attending a funeral for one of my friends. The employee had a sheepish expression on her face when I shared the occasion for my formal attire and did not know what to say next. Her co-worker looked at me with a smile and said, **“Well, a funeral kind of is a graduation!”** With that I headed out the door with my coffee in hand and drove the next 90 minutes or so to celebrate my friend's graduation from life here on earth to now spending it with Jesus in heaven.

As I reflected on my conversation that Friday morning at Tim Hortons, I found it interesting that it took place at a time of year when many people are preparing for graduations. With university and college exams now finished some students from these institutions are preparing to graduate with their degrees. Many high school students are counting down the days until they graduate and head off to higher learning institutions in the fall. Students currently in Grade 8 may already be looking ahead to their graduations and looking at what they might wear for the ceremony. When Nadine was still teaching in daycare, some daycares would have graduation ceremonies for those heading off to JK and SK in the fall. When it comes to these kinds of graduations, the individual who is graduating is moving on to a setting that is new and different in their lives. When we graduate from living life here on earth like my friend recently did, we experience a new environment in heaven free from sin, evil, and death. The best part of this new environment is spending each day with Jesus.

But students who are graduating not only experience a new environment in the fall but also take on new responsibilities and learning challenges. Even if the person graduating is done with their academics and enters into the work force, that comes with different demands and challenges too.

Thinking about all of this reminded me how we as believers still living here on earth experience a graduation of sorts by receiving new challenges and responsibilities at the discretion of our Saviour. This graduation of sorts is revealed in Jesus' telling of the parable of the loaned money. A man was going away on a long trip, but before he left, he entrusted his money to each of his three servants while he was gone. He gave five bags of silver to the first servant, two bags to the second, and one bag to the third. After a long time away, the master returned from his trip and called each of the servants to give an account of how they used the money entrusted to them. The two servants that the master had entrusted with the most bags had invested what they had been given and doubled the amount for the master. The master was full of praise toward both servants and said, **"Well done my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together"** (Matthew 25:21). However, the third servant who was entrusted with one bag of silver did not do anything with this money and missed out on receiving the master's praise and graduating with more responsibilities.

Jesus' parable here is a reminder that until we graduate to join Him in heaven, He is watching very closely how we are using the gifts He has entrusted to us to use for His glory. He wants to see us being intentional with the use of our gifts so that He can graduate us into being given additional talents and responsibilities.

In this season when so many students will be focusing and preparing for their graduations, may we as believers use this time to look closely at what Jesus has entrusted to our care so that He will say to us at some point, **"Well done my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities."** It may not be a cap and gown moment, but it will certainly be pleasing for us to hear our Master's praise at our graduation.

Keep safe and God bless.

Pastor Dean