

## REMEMBERING MY MASKS

I saw a commercial last week that showed four men wearing their CPAP masks and one who was not. One of the men wearing his mask asked the man who was not, why he did not have his on. This person went on to explain a procedure he went through that no longer requires him to wear his mask at night in order to get a restful sleep. I smiled at the end of the commercial recognizing myself as one of the four who has to wear a CPAP mask each night. I have been wearing this mask for about four years now. I can't honestly say in my case that I wake up from my sleeps more rested, but I can say my wife no longer complains about my snoring keeping her awake.

I adjusted pretty quickly to wearing this kind of mask four years ago. I wonder if part of the reason why I adjusted so quickly is because of the various masks I have worn over the years. I have worn goalie masks since the time I started playing organized hockey around the age of 6 or 7. I am glad I did not play goal in the era of Johnny Bower because I can recall many times when pucks hit the cage on my mask before I could get my glove up to prevent it.

I also recall one or two years when I wore a mask as part of a Halloween costume. I think one of the masks I wore was Pierre Elliott Trudeau when he was Prime Minister. In case anyone is wondering, I did not get a Justin Trudeau mask during the years he was our Prime Minister.

Naturally we all became familiar with wearing masks during COVID. I remember my daughter actually having to get used to wearing a mask while training for basketball during that first year of COVID. Her practices would last two hours. I do not know how my daughter and the other players were able to practice with their masks on for that length of time. I have found it interesting during these past few weeks the number of boxes of masks people have donated to our upcoming garage sale as I have unpacked their donations.

When it comes to CPAP masks, hockey masks, and medical masks, their purpose is meant to protect or help us. Halloween masks might serve to complete a costume's look, but they can also be used to hide our identity. While we do not wear a Halloween mask to hide our feelings and emotions, I am sure there have been times when we have masked the pain we are really feeling in order not to worry those around us. Sometimes we try to mask our true feelings by conveying the message we are okay or everything is good, but inside we are struggling greatly. We may try to hide our true feelings from others, but somebody we can never keep them from is God. David came to understand this when He wrote in **Psalm 7:9**:

**For You look deep within the mind and heart, O righteous God.**

David could be very emotional at times, which is very evident reading through the many psalms he wrote. It can be surprising to some people who read his psalms how honest, open, and transparent David was in sharing his feelings with God. David understood that God could already see what was going on deep within his heart so there was no need to hide these feelings. For some of us it might be terrifying to think that our thoughts and feelings are an open book to God, but we should view this as comforting instead. We need to remember how valuable and precious we are to God and remind ourselves how much He dearly loves us. As a result, we should feel confident removing our masks around Him and comfortably share with Him what we may have been hiding from others. As we do so, we will discover, just as David shared in his psalms, that ***we can trust God to help us through our weaknesses, struggles, and insecurities.*** It can be a lot of pressure for us to keep putting on masks to convince others that we are doing okay, when we truly are not. God takes away this pressure when it comes to our relationship with Him, however, so we can truly be comfortable as He helps strengthen us and make us more whole again.

I do not wear a goalie mask anymore, but I still have to put on my CPAP mask before I put my head on my pillow each night. I think wearing my goalie mask was a lot cooler than my CPAP one. The reason why I say this is because my daughter laughs at me when she sees me wearing it referring to it as my Darth Vader mask. My wife does not make fun of it knowing it is better that I wear it than to hear me snore like a bear again.

Keep safe and God bless,

Pastor Dean