

REMINDED OF A PARABLE THANKS TO MONTREAL FANS

I shared in my mid-week message last week how my neighbour, who is a Montreal Canadiens fan, provided me with some of his salt so I could put it on my icy driveway. It is interesting how we get along so well as neighbours considering the difference in hockey teams we cheer for. I am wondering if I am coming across in a positive way to other Montreal Canadiens fans as well. The reason why I say this is because on Sunday after the church service was over a Montreal Canadiens fan came up to me with a gift. They wanted me to open the gift with them present and much to my shock they gave me a Toronto Maple Leafs ball cap. It is one thing to receive a bag of salt from a Montreal Canadiens fan, but to be given a Toronto Maple Leafs cap came as a complete surprise. I tried my new hat on for the first time when I got home and even my daughter commented on how good it looked on me. I can't wait for warmer weather to come along again so that I can show off my new Toronto Maple Leafs cap.

These two incidents during this past week reminded me how, despite the differences we may have with others, it should not stand in the way of us showing care and neighbourly love toward one another. While this has been the case with the differences I have with Montreal Canadiens fans, this was not what we saw happen in the parable Jesus shared about the Good Samaritan.

Jesus told this parable as a result of a question asked to Him by an expert in religious law about what one must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus first replied by asking the expert to share his understanding of what the law of Moses had to say. The man answered:

You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength, and with all your mind. And, love your neighbour as yourself. (Luke 10:27)

Jesus, being the true expert, told him that if he did these things he would live. But this expert wanted to justify his actions, so he asked for clarification from Jesus about who exactly his neighbour was. Jesus replied by sharing the well known parable of the Good Samaritan. Jesus started the parable off by telling the story of a Jewish man who was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho and was attacked along the way by bandits. These bandits stripped the man of his clothes, beat him up, and left him for dead at the side of the road. A priest happened to come along and saw the man lying there but crossed over to the

other side of the road and kept going. A temple assistant came next. He went over in curiosity to look at the man lying there but decided to keep on going. Finally, a Samaritan came along. A deep hatred existed between the Jews and Samaritans because the Jewish people saw themselves as pure descendants of Abraham and viewed the Samaritans as a mixed race. Jesus shared how the Samaritan felt compassion for the injured man, despite him being a Jew. He soothed the injured man's wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. The Samaritan even took the injured man to an inn to be cared for and told the owner he would cover the costs while he stayed there to recover. After finishing the parable, Jesus asked the expert in religious law which of the three men acted as a neighbour toward the man who was attacked by bandits. The man replied, "**The one who showed him mercy.**" Jesus replied by saying, "**Yes, now go and do the same.**"

Jesus emphasized in this parable how some people might not show neighbourly care and support toward somebody else because of differences that exist between them. The priest and temple assistant in Jesus' parable were not willing to show love and care toward somebody who they had differences with. This was not the case with the Samaritan, however, and Jesus told the religious expert and us as well to go and do the same. My Montreal Canadiens-supporting neighbor as well as one of my parishioners cheer for a different team than I do. There might be other things that we differ upon as well. Despite these differences, it does not stand in the way of us showing kindness and Christ-like love toward one another. This is what I have been experiencing at the end of 2025 and into the first few days of this new year. I cannot help but think these experiences were meant by God to help me, and all of us, to be committed in this new year to showing love, care, and compassion toward one another despite any differences we may have with them. We don't know if this religious expert followed Jesus' advice to go and do the same, but let's make sure in 2026 this is how we are living our lives for Jesus.

Somebody commented after last week's message that it was not surprising to see a Montreal Canadiens fan do this for me because these fans are the greatest. I don't know about that, but I can agree these fans have been kind to this Toronto Maple Leafs-loving pastor.

Keep safe and God bless,

Pastor Dean