

TRYING NOT TO STUMBLE AGAIN

Last Thursday afternoon my daughter played her final high school basketball game at her home gym. COVID took away from her playing in her Grade 9 year but she has played on the school team each year since. For four seasons I have walked into the school gym to cheer her on, but I have never made an entrance quite the way I did this past Thursday.

It should come as no surprise to anyone who reads my messages that I always stop and grab a Tim Horton's coffee before going to a game. When I entered the gym carrying my coffee, I immediately turned my head to the left in order to see the score and how much time was still left in the junior game that was playing. Because I turned my head in that direction upon entering, I did not see that there was a long bench a few steps in front of me.

The next thing I knew, I hit the bench with my shin causing me to stumble over it while carrying my coffee. Somehow, I kept my balance after stumbling over the bench but I was not very graceful in doing so. I was glad that my coffee did not go for a tumble in all of my stumbling. After first assessing there was no damage done to my coffee in my stumble, I then became aware of the throbbing pain I was experiencing where I hit my shin.

When I sat down on the bleachers I was apprehensive at first to pull up the jean leg to assess the damage. A few spots of blood on my jeans finally prompted me to do so and I discovered two nice gashes on my shin. I made quite an entrance stumbling into my daughter's final basketball home game on Thursday and have the scars to prove it.

My embarrassing stumble from last week reminded me of the time when Jesus stumbled carrying something for us. After Jesus was sentenced to death by Pilate, He was forced to carry the cross upon which He would soon be crucified through the streets of Jerusalem on route to Golgotha. Jesus had already endured whipping and violence at the hands of the Roman soldiers before having to carry the cross. At some point in the journey Jesus stumbled and fell while carrying the cross He would die on in order to save us from our sins.

We sometimes forget in our day to day lives how Jesus stumbled for us carrying the cross in order that we could experience forgiveness for our sins through His death on that Friday we now call "Good!" After being reminded of this, I found

myself thinking as well about how we sometimes may find ourselves stumbling over Jesus. The apostle Paul speaks about this when he wrote:

I am placing a stone in Jerusalem that makes people stumble, a rock that makes them fall. But anyone who trusts in Him will never be disgraced. (Romans 9:33)

In this portion of his letter Paul was pointing out how many people at that time were stumbling when it came to believing and trusting in Jesus as the Messiah. Part of the reason people were stumbling with this decision was Jesus did not meet their expectations as to the kind of Messiah they thought He should be. Even today people are still stumbling in deciding whether to put their trust in belief in Jesus. As believers we can still find ourselves stumbling in other ways when it comes to Jesus. For instance:

- a believer can stumble thinking Jesus is okay with just a partial commitment to follow Him as opposed to being all in,
- a believer can stumble when it comes to turning control of their lives completely over to Jesus and being doers of His will,
- a believer can stumble with embracing certain values Jesus encourages such as humility, being a servant, or forgiving that can stand in contrast with what society values.

Perhaps we have been stumbling in some of these or in other ways when it comes to our relationship with Jesus. If we have, then let's take my incident from last week as our reminder ***to look more carefully at our daily walk with Jesus so that we stumble less and obey Him more.***

Keep safe and God bless,

Pastor Dean