

## Downsizing

Advertisements are interesting aren't they. We all see them, everyday. Do you have any idea how many we see in a day?? My information tells me that we see about 400 ads every day. And my further intrepid research informs me that the main purpose of ads is not to attract new customers, but in fact to retain the customers a merchant already has. About 80% of ad money is for those customers that already have that product. And I would concur with that. I remember when our kids were 3,5,7 and we were watching tv, if a 'Ford' or 'Chrysler" commercial came on the tv there was no reaction. But if a Chevrolet commercial appeared, they would look up from their play and watch it.

We live in an advertising world. Each industry has a certain percentage of sales they need to spend to keep up with the competition. The biggest percentage spenders, percentage of sales, are the soaps. The competition is fierce and people are willing to change brands of soap at the slightest change in price or superior deal. Maybe even the television program that is sponsored. Part of it must be the attention to our environment honed into us through thousands of years of needing to be aware of everything in our environment. We may think we don't notice, but we do, and our advertising friends know we do.

In our Psalm this morning there is the stated intention of the Psalmist to worship. I don't know and have not been able to find out how often people, ordinary people like you and me, in ancient times, actually did worship. I know that the early books of the Bible, including the story of creation indicate a seven day week, with the Sabbath, or day of rest on the seventh day. I do know that people who lived 2600 years ago lived in a world as full of stimuli as we live in today. They were different.

There were temples to the gods everywhere. There was the community in which they lived that invited them to offer sacrifices on a daily basis. They might not have had 400 advertisements every day like we do. But they were continually subjected to their environment, and they had to find a way to keep their focus on what they believed to be most important.

And so they begin with the singing of this Psalm

"I will praise You with my whole heart"

They had to do the same thing as we do. They had to let go of all the things that distracted them during the past week. They had to downsize from all the advertisements that had plagued their minds from the images that were impressed on them. There were temples and wars and threats of wars and fierce animals constantly. I like the last sentence in the 23 Psalm.

"Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the lord forever."

You can bring all the memories of goodness and mercy into this place. You can bring the memories of the person who smiled at you with a the kind of smile that told you you were precious and had a kindness in you that you didn't even know existed. You can bring memories of mercy of the people who treated you kindly and listened to you even when you thought you

had said everything that needed to be said. And they waited again and again until you were indeed finished. But they stayed with you. You can bring all the goodness of your lives and celebrate it here Sunday by Sunday, and let it displace all those other things that cannot be brought into the house of the Lord.

You will have to downsize and leave at the door all those memories when you were mistreated, either in public school when you were just a little kid and there were bigger kids there who knew how to get under your skin. You will have to let go of the jealousies that you have harboured deep in your soul where no one else could see them. At least you thought they couldn't see. You will have to leave behind the envy that would like to hurt those who have more than you do.

You will have to downsize and let go of the anger you righteously felt at being mistreated. There is no place for it as you sing the songs of praise. Instead the Psalmist says:

In the day when I cried out, You answered me

Every time you sing those words you remember the answering of God, not the hurt. These words create a little more space for praise, and as the Psalmist says:

“you made me bold in the strength of my mind”.

Coming from a farming background I can't imagine ordinary folks went to the synagogue every Sabbath day. When there are crops to be harvested it is a matter of life and limb. The grapes and the wheat have to be harvested. I don't know if they had apples and apricots and peaches and pears, but a farmer is a farmer and work does call. We never did any work on Sunday except milking the cows which had to be done.

Even on Christmas day that had to be done. And as a teenager I wondered about some of our neighbours who seemed to work Sundays. How do they ever get away from work and see life in perspective? How do they ever take time to think and see where life is going? How do they ever have time to not make \$10,000 mistakes, for the sake of another day of work?

Today, of course, most people don't have to work seven days a week - unless they are executives who want to earn more money. But I think ancient peoples had a sense that there was something more to life than an extra \$100,000. We are a most amazing part of creation. Yesterday we weren't here, and then comes the moment when we take our first breath and all of a sudden we act like we belong. We bellow for something to eat or drink. We holler when we are uncomfortable. We laugh when we are tickled. We smile when we are smiled at. And we act as if we belong. And we do.

This tradition of a gathering of people to say and to sing these words is a powerful statement ancient peoples used to set aside some of the events of the past week and centre again on what is most beneficial to us as creations of God. They knew there was something more important than \$50,000 or a pretty house or even a fine hairdo. They knew with a certainty that astonishes us that to be human we have to let go of some things and hold fast to other things.

Just listen to this:

Though the Lord is on high  
Yet he regards the lowly:  
But the proud He knows from afar.

That isn't a new idea in the history of human life. That was written 2500 years ago. That was an idea that tried to set in proper perspective the order of human life. I was going to ask if any of you have boxes in your house that you haven't opened for ten or twenty years. When I decided to move to the Garden Homes I asked my six foot two grandson to help by going down in my two foot crawl space and remove 50 boxes. Boxes I hadn't looked at for 20 years. Any of you have boxes you haven't looked at for 20 years?

The downsizing that I had to do made me think of all the downsizing we do each Sunday here. We let go of all the advertisements we've accumulated during the week. We let go of things we hadn't looked at for a long time, sometimes things we'd almost forgot were there. Sometimes we just need silence. The Quakers taught us that. We don't always have to talk. Sometimes the silence is enough for things to come to the surface we had hoped to conceal a bit longer.

Sometimes we need to sing to make a statement of who we are and who we'd like to become. Sometimes we need to say "God be with you" or "and also with you". To accept and reassure each other. There is a lot that goes on here on Sunday morning. When we permit it, there is a lot of shuffling of things we hold on to, and things we let go of. That's what I call, after my move, downsizing, and letting ourselves become children of God.

Amen

Harold Jenner