



Colours of Renewal

by Pastor Doug Lutz

Freely you have received, freely give.—Jesus (Matthew 10:8b)
Whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.—Jesus (Matthew 16:25)

When winter thaw transitions to spring something inside us wakes up. A sense of anticipation lingers in the air. Our attitudes and conversations come alive long before the blooming begins. Perhaps it's the hope of warmer weather, longer days and the promise of radiantly coloured landscapes that cause many to dismiss the ugliness of a messy transition. Since spring arrived early, the transition from ice to muddy paths that threaten to suck the boots off your feet simply didn't happen this year.

Whatever the reason for the early arrival, spring offers the promise of rebirth. In the words of Parker Palmer in his book *Let Your Life Speak*, spring is “a great giveaway of blooming beyond all necessity and reason—done, it would appear—for no reason other than the sheer joy of it. The gift of life, which seemed to be withdrawn in winter, has been given once again, and nature, rather than hoarding it, gives it all away.”

What a great perspective on life. Spring is teaching me to look more carefully at

everything that has been invested in me during winter's harsh lessons. Even under the frosty chill of the COVID-19 crisis and all the pain, suffering and loss it has left in its wake—life, love, kindness, mercy and compassion are budding in fresh ways, threatening to bloom into a greater grace than we could imagine.

It reminds me of everything Jesus invested of Himself to the point of losing His life for the sheer joy of it... for the sheer joy of giving you and me a new one (Heb. 12:2). Rather than hoarding what was His, He freely gave us all He had to give “pressed down, shaken together and running over” (Lk 6:38)... and still does. All for free, no less!

Free. Now there's a word everyone likes. Especially when it means getting “something for nothing.” What is easy to miss is that what is free always costs somebody something. I'm learning now by experience what I have known so long in my head. Namely, that if you receive a gift—no matter how it is packaged—you keep it alive not by hoarding it but by giving it away, freely ... flamboyantly ... hilariously ... all for the sheer joy of it.

As you pass from your own personal winter into the springtime of renewed life, what glance or touch might God bring through you to thaw a frozen relationship? What act of kindness toward a friend or stranger might make their world seem hospitable again?

May God make your life in Christ bloom with a riot of colour you have never known before today so that others might see His light at work in you and “glorify your Father in heaven” (Mt 5:16).

Hungry for Life!

Things I'm Thinking About

Here is what I am hearing, learning and thinking about as we move through our current crisis into a re-calibrated future and beyond. Although we don't know for

sure when we can meet again face-to-face, we need to prepare ourselves now for what might be different later. So here is this week's thought I want to put forward for consideration and prayer.

The Digital Church is Here to Stay

If COVID-19 has had any positive effect, we have been reminded that our *mission* as a church is much broader than singing a few songs and catching up at coffee time after Sunday worship. We are called to reach beyond ourselves and invest in the lives of others who either don't yet know Jesus or who are marginally connected to the church; even if that means we maintain the digital touch that has kept us connected over the past several weeks.

What this means is that as the time nears for congregations to consider physically gathering within the four walls of their church building, Sundays can no longer be the end all delivery system for connection; especially for those of us who have made a digital connection with others outside the local fellowship. We need to shift our focus from Sunday to every day. People need to find faith and live out their faith in relevant ways 7-days a week. That is, we have an opportunity to take a both/and rather than an either/or approach to ministry that is both analog (physical) and digital (cyber).

So here are three questions we can chew on as we go forward from here:

1. Statistics show that a digital interface reaches more people on a greater scale than physical gatherings. So, how can we become more creative and innovative in the way we reach out to others with the good news of Jesus using the digital resources available to us?
 2. How willing are you to adapt to new environments that may not be as familiar or preferred as a stake holder for the sake of reaching the lost? And, when the "lost are found" and eventually darken the doors of the physical church, will the experience online be the same in person? (This is about consistency and authenticity.)
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3. What might God be inviting you to do in order to bridge the gap prayerfully, financially and actively as a participant in a both/and approach to the mission of reaching the lost and disenfranchised?

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