

**Pastoral Reflections – Doing Good -- May 6, 2020**  
**By Captain Sharon Tidd**

In recent days the words of Titus 3:14a have streamed through my mind on many occasions. “Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good.” The Salvation Army is known for its desire to “do good” and “bring hope”, and we continue to do that each and every day, and especially now in the midst of COVID-19 restrictions that have added to the needs around us.

I’ve been richly inspired as I’ve helped out at Boundless Vancouver through this period. This ministry has been handing out take-out breakfasts, fresh produce food hampers, and dry-good COVID-19 hampers to 300-350 individuals/families every week. The team at Boundless is devoted to “doing what is good”, and I’ve been blessed to come alongside and help them in those efforts. Similarly, I’m now helping out at Belkin House (our largest shelter in BC) on Mondays. Year-round they feed and care for the 100s who are in residence in the shelter and transitional housing. I’ve been blessed to be able to help prepare and serve meals, and put on the ‘barista’ hat and serve up lattes and caramel lattes and Americanos. (As a non-coffee drinker it has been a steep learning curve!) It has been so wonderful to be able to bring smiles to resident’s faces; people who know they will have three good meals and a warm home at The Salvation Army for the duration of the pandemic.

Yesterday was Giving Tuesday and Canadians were encouraged to give to local and national charities. It feels good to ‘give’. It feels good to “do good”. But I’ve been convicted by God’s call to devote myself to doing what is good. Is that my heart’s deepest devotion? We live in a pretty self-centered society, so this others focus is counter cultural. I want this to be the devotion of my heart – to see the good that I can do and choose to do it, in love!

In these days of the pandemic we have seen so many reach out and do good for others. We’ve been making a whole lot of noise at 7 pm every evening, as a way to thank those who are on the front lines of the fight against the virus. Many have decorated their windows and sidewalks with hearts, words of affirmation, smiles ... love! I’ve read articles on teachers who have gone out-of-their way to help their students learn on-line by offering one-on-one tutorials,

and in some cases, making distanced visits to homes just to encourage and connect with their students. People are going above and beyond for others in these days! Loving your neighbour seems to have gone viral! It is truly inspiring!

And, the beauty of it is that we are choosing to recognize and do good for everyone who is working for our good – from our federal and provincial leaders, to health care workers, pharmacists, social workers and first responders, to janitors and support staff, to shelter workers, to social workers and pastors, to food bank staff, to farmers and truckers, to transit employees and delivery drivers, to gas station attendants, to bank and grocery store staff, to teachers and administrators, to government employees working to bring COVID benefits to those who need them, and to restaurants who have stayed open despite significant drops in business. All of these workers are putting themselves at risk for our benefit. They are devoted to doing what is good. Most would say they're just doing their jobs, but we know differently. They are heroes and their faithful efforts are saving lives and keeping us all going. So our hats are off to them! As the recipients of their selfless efforts, we choose to do what is good by acknowledging and thanking them, and it is right that we do so.

This is exactly the kind of attitude and action that Paul, through God's Spirit, was asking of believers in Titus 3:14a. The question is, will we continue in this way once the pandemic is over and things move to a new 'normal'? Will we continue to say thank you? Will we continue to be thankful? Will this devotion to doing good that has gone viral in this period remain part of our DNA going forward? Or will we slide back into former ways?

God has used this pandemic to bring us all to new heights of neighbourliness. Everyone, it seems, is looking for ways to help and encourage others. With so much time on our hands, we're eager to find ways to contribute. We're picking up the phone and calling our neighbours who are alone. We're helping to deliver groceries and prescriptions. We're checking in to make sure others are staying safe. We're saying hello as we pass others (keeping our distance), and smiling (even from behind our masks). Artists are offering free performances online. Seamstresses are sewing masks and gowns. Manufacturers are retrofitting their operations to produce PPE. Teachers are re-educating themselves and bringing quality, creative instruction to students online.

