

Best Christmas Ever

I was thinking about my best Christmas ever. I thought of the one when my brother Bill had turned 16 on December 12th. He quit school that day and got a job delivering telegrams in Royal Oak and Vicinity on a Bicycle in the dead of Winter in Michigan. I doubt he had a decent coat; I know I didn't, and he never did either. I had been told there would be no Christmas that year because my father was not working. I was prepared for that. When I woke up Christmas morning there was a stack of presents for me. My brother had quit school, got a job and bought me Christmas. I knew he loved me, but I didn't realize how much he loved me. The other day I was putting the doll bed my grandfather made for me when I was 6 or 7 years old back together (there are no nails in the bed and the dowel rods are wearing out) and in the bed I keep some memories. There was the dog Bill had bought me when he came home on furlough two years later, 1947. I treasure that gift it was the last gift he would give me. He would pass away in June of that year. My heart broke at the loss of that big brother who would give me so much of himself. My other favorite Christmases would be when my children were little. We always did the early Christmas Eve service with them. As we rode home our children started yelling, "There it is" I asked them what they were looking at and they said, "The Star." They saw the most bright and beautiful star shining down and knew that was the star that led the Wise Men to the Christ child. I loved their excitement and their faith. It brought joy to our Christmas. They always received much more than what they had circled in the catalogs but not as much as they wanted when they wrote at the top of the page, "This page."

Then, of course, there were the Christmas's with the Grandchildren. What joy that was. We would light the advent wreath and have a delicious meal and somewhere in there would come a noise at the door and Grandpa would go out and bring back three presents that had been left at the front door. Santa had begun his gift giving journey. Their excitement was so wonderful and contagious. I loved those times with my grandchildren. There was always a "Pickle" ornament hidden in the tree and they each received a candy cane when it was found.

Now Christmases are quieter, and I often send a gift of money (it wraps well and can be used for what one chooses.) This year I have made Amazon happy and ordered more than I intended. I have not begun to wrap but the tree (small tabletop tree) is decorated, and I am getting out the manger scenes and the Santa Clauses thanks to my son who as usual, helped me with what I needed to do. In all these years I have collected a lot and wonder where I am to put it all. But I look at the ornaments going back to our first Christmas as a married couple and I see the memories and they make me smile. There are the things we made as a family, and the things made in school and the things from grandchildren, and I realize how blessed I am. I've said it before, but God took a three- pound infant whose future was in doubt and blessed her life with children, grandchildren and great grandchildren and the memories of a lifetime. Thanks be to a generous and loving God.

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Lord, we thank you for the life given to us. May we remember to use it in your service. We thank you for each day. May we use our days in service to you, remembering those who have needs for this life and the next. Those who hunger, those who have nothing, those who need to hear your word. Thanks be to God for our abundance; may we use it to praise you and to serve your children. Be with our church Lord, may all we do serve to bless you and those in need. Be with Pastor Don and his family, bless him and his ministry. Be with our staff and leaders, help them in all they do. Be with us in this Christmas Season and may we all remember the gift of the Christ Child, born in a manger, born to lead us to you, born to die for the forgiveness of our sins. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen

Grace Epperson