



Treasures of the Heart

There are things in a person's life that can never be forgotten, regardless of how old or feeble one becomes. I truly believe that even when one is ravaged by dementia or worse, Alzheimer's, there are little memories that stay with us—even if we can't seem to communicate. I remember when I was in seminary there was an elderly couple that needed help due to Alzheimer's. The husband's condition was such that he could not communicate, nor could he walk without being guided. Before his illness he was the comptroller of the city of Columbus and was a concert pianist with the Columbus Symphony. One evening, when I was helping him to his bedroom, his wife turned on the radio and the Symphony was performing. He stopped and slightly raised his eyebrows. It was at that moment I was convinced that somewhere locked inside were those memories.

For me, one of the best memories I have of this time of year is, and I know this will probably sound silly to some, but it is receiving that little brown bag of candy, an orange and an apple—and especially those gelatin orange slices—after the Christmas program at church. I know you are probably thinking, "That's his best memory of Christmas?" Yup, that's it! Some of you have heard me tell of how abusive my father could be, and Christmas was no exception. I'm pretty sure the first ten to twelve years of my life our poor Christmas tree didn't survive the season without being thrown halfway across the room during one of my dad's tirades. So a bag of goodies from the church was a real gift. Even if you really messed up your lines during the Children's Christmas pageant, you would still get that little brown bag of goodies.

To an adult it may not seem like much, but to a child who was or is raised in an abusive household, something so simple as a bag of goodies can make all the difference. I can't help but get somewhat giddy about this as I'm sitting here looking at the boxes of gifts for Operation Christmas Child. How blessed are we because we are giving a gift to a child with no expectation of anything in return. The children will enjoy the gifts, but we will be dancing in the streets (metaphorically, of course—in my condition I couldn't dance even if I wanted to). As I said, it may sound silly that a bag of goodies is my best Christmas memory, but that memory explodes with meaning. God's unconditional love is, to me, like that bag of candy—no conditions, no exceptions, no matter how much you messed up—God loves us and pours out the gift of life upon us. We don't have to beg or plead or anything else to be loved—we just are! God gave us a wonderful gift at Christmas all those years ago. For unto us a child is born, and that child is *Christ the Lord*.

I want to thank all of you for the cards and gifts I received during pastor appreciation month. You are all a true blessing. Donna and I also want to wish all of you a blessed Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year—we both have been blessed by your love. I want to thank all of you, and especially the Church Council, for allowing me the opportunity to be with as you interim pastor. The Lord is present and active here at Peace Lutheran.

Pastor Dennis & Donna Reich

