



The Real Christmas by Helen Gregory, Florissant, Missouri

When I was just a little girl, Christmas was to me: Carols, lights, toys, delight, anticipation just to see what lay beneath the tree for me. Mounds of snow, sleighs and bells, Christmas was to me: Stocking, candy, fireplaces, long weekends with friendly faces, but most of all, my tree: green and red decorations, an angel all aglow, but I confess what I liked best were gifts that lay below. I thought I knew the meaning of Christmas and His birth. But as a child my thoughts gave way to trees and toys of worth. But Christmas trees soon dry out as presents are unwrapped; what's left behind is hard to find, though riches are untapped. If everyday were Christmas and the love we share that day could be given to the lonely to bring a golden ray. Then the world could be a Christmas tree, shining near and far, bringing hope to all who need A special Christmas star.

This was an email I got 10 years ago, I thought it was good for the Christmas Season. As Joyce Campbell brought out in Sabbath School that week, do we pass up the opportunity to help someone because we don't have the time, just couldn't make ourselves stop to help, God will hold us accountable.

Ruth went to her mail box and there was only one letter. She picked it up and looked at it before opening, but then she looked at the envelope again. There was no stamp, no postmark, only her name and address. She read the letter: Dear Ruth: I'm going to be in your neighborhood Thursday afternoon and I'd like to stop by for a visit. Love Always, Jesus.

Her hands were shaking as she placed the letter on the table. "Why would the Lord want to visit me? I'm nobody special. I don't have anything to offer." With that thought, Ruth remembered her empty kitchen cabinets. "Oh my goodness, I really don't have anything to offer. I'll have to run down to the store and buy something for dinner." She reached for her purse and counted out its contents. Five dollars and forty cents. Well, I can get some bread and cold cuts, at least." She threw on her coat and hurried out the door. A loaf of French bread, a half-pound of sliced turkey, and a carton of milk ... leaving Ruth with a grand total of twelve cents to last her until Monday. Nonetheless, she felt good as she headed home, her meager offerings tucked under her arm.

"Hey lady, can you help us, lady?" Ruth had been so absorbed in her dinner plans, she hadn't even noticed two figures huddled in the alleyway. A man and a woman, both of them dressed in little more than rags. "Look lady, I ain't got a job, ya know, and my wife and I have been living out here on the street, and, well, now it's getting cold and we're getting kinda hungry and, well, if you could help us. Lady, we'd really appreciate it." Ruth looked at them both. They were dirty, they smelled bad and frankly, she was certain that they could get some kind of work if they really wanted to. "Sir, I'd like to help you, but I'm a poor woman myself. All I have is a few cold cuts and some bread, and I'm having an important guest for dinner tonight and I was planning on serving that to Him." "Yeah, well, okay lady, I understand. Thanks anyway." The man put his arm around the woman's shoulders, turned and headed back into the alley.

As she watched them leave, Ruth felt a familiar twinge in her heart. "Sir, wait!" The couple stopped and turned as she ran down the alley after them. "Look, why don't you take this food. I'll figure out something else to serve my guest." She handed the man her grocery bag. "Thank you lady. Thank you very much!" "Yes, thank you!" It was the man's wife, and Ruth could see now that she was shivering. "You know, I've got another coat at home. Here, why don't you take this one." Ruth unbuttoned her jacket and slipped it over the woman's shoulders. Then smiling, she turned and walked back to the street. .. without her coat and with nothing to serve her guest. "Thank you lady! Thank you very much!"

Ruth was chilled by the time she reached her front door, and worried too. The Lord was coming to visit and she didn't have anything to offer Him. She fumbled through her purse for the door key. But as she did, she noticed another envelope in her mailbox. "That's odd. The mailman doesn't usually come twice in one day." Dear Ruth: It was so good to see you again. Thank you for the lovely meal. And thank you, too, for the beautiful coat. Love always, Jesus. **The air was still cold, but even without her coat, Ruth no longer noticed.**

PASTOR'S CORNER

The MANY faces of Emma.... I wouldn't want to start naming the expressions she is making but thought we could all enjoy seeing a "sister" before her new sister gets here toward the end of March. She is going to have to share this space then, LOL. Glad we get to share on Facebook and here in the Newsletter.



Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. Heb12:1-2

World-renowned violinist, Joshua Bell, has an unusual way of leading the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, a forty-four-member chamber orchestra. Instead of waving a baton he directs while playing his Stradivarius with the other violinists. Bell told Colorado Public Radio, "Even while I'm playing I can give them all kinds of direction and signals that I think only they would understand at this point. They know by every little dip in my violin, or raise in my eyebrow, or the way I draw the bow. They know the sound I'm looking for from the entire orchestra."

Just as the orchestra members watch Joshua Bell, the Bible instructs us to keep our eyes on Jesus our Lord. After listing many heroes of the faith in Hebrews 11, the writer says, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith" (Heb. 12:1-2).

Let us keep our eyes on Jesus our Savior as He directs our lives.

Jesus promised, "I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:20). Because He is, we have the amazing privilege of keeping our eyes on Him while He conducts the music of our lives.

Lord, our eyes look to You this day so we may follow Your direction and live in harmony with You.

INSIGHT

Have you ever walked away from a parent, teacher, coach, or military officer you thought was being too hard on you?

The men and women of faith listed in Hebrews 11 must have wondered at times whether their God was asking more of them than they could possibly give. Yet through doubt, personal failure, and unfulfilled dreams, the Bible gives all of them honorable mention—as witnesses to the faith that has been entrusted to us.

Now it's our turn. When we face fears, we have the opportunity to follow the One who asks us to **trust Him** in a way that lifts us above our own natural inclinations. This is a moment to remember the lingering witness of Jesus's own disciples who so often heard the words, "Don't be afraid." From the stories of those who have gone before us, we are reminded that it was on a road of faith that Jesus and His witnesses suffered to bring others to God.

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Baptisms Nov 4, 2017



We at the Clanton SDA church are always thrilled and blessed when we have someone give their lives to Christ. I asked for comments from the individuals.

Baptisms on Sabbath November 4:

1. Sam Smith (rebaptized) He first joined the Clanton SDA church in 1958 but since SL his wife died has been wanting to re-consecrate his life to God.
2. Madison Michelle Chrishon age 14. "I would like to thank God for all that he has done and is continuing to do in my life. I feel like He has definitely been leading me with a mightier hand since I have been baptized- not mightier in the sense that He has become stronger, but in that I have made more room to receive His greater mercies and miracles. Between passing out more GLOW tracts and widening the lines of communication with family and friends, I am happy to see that my decision to die to self has had an immediate effect in God's eyes, and He has wasted no time using this now empty vessel. I'm thankful that I have allowed God to use me in this wonderful painting that is the work of Salvation."
3. Samuel Eleazar Chrishon age 11.
4. Diane Fulmer joined the Clanton SDA church years ago on 3/6/1965 and her girls went to church school with Shawn Smith. She has since come back to join us again this year and wanted to be baptized to give her life again to Christ.

Re-baptisms on Sabbath November 25:

1. Maxine Plier
 2. Tony Plier
- "Mom said that I was 5 weeks old when she was last baptized, she wanted to be ready when the Lord comes back and so do I."

Re-Baptisms Nov 25, 2017



The Story of the Candy Cane



It was a very cold December day only 2 days before Christmas Eve as an old couple discussed an important decision to be made. The old couple had been the candy makers for the town for as long as they had been married. They loved the children and had always wanted a child to whom they could pass on their candy making secrets, and could carry on the family business. But, alas, no child ever came into their home. Each Christmas Eve the old couple would give the town's children a new Christmas treat as a gift.



Today was the day to make the new treat. They discussed possible designs and colors. They talked about a new flavor. At last they decided upon an old flavor, the children's favorite, but it must have a new shape. Yes, peppermint was the favorite of the town's children.

Yes, it would be the chosen flavor for this year.

The old couple longed to help the children remember the real reason for Christmas. As the old couple set about experimenting with different shapes and sizes they prayed to their Heavenly Father to give them His idea to spread the word about His Son, Jesus.

As they were experimenting, they spoke of Jesus' life. "He was called the Lamb of God, the Good Shepherd, and He is our Shepherd", said the old woman.

"Yes, and the angel said, 'His name shall be called Jesus'" said the old man.

"Then let's make the new candy in the shape of a Shepherd's rod," said the old woman. "It will remind the children that He is their good Shepherd."

"Yes, my dear, a wonderful idea. We shall do just that," stated the old man.

As he was working to make the Shepherd's rod, he rotated the rod in order to form it better. As he did, his wife exclaimed, "Oh, my dear, it is the shape of a 'J'. It is the first letter of His glorious name."

"So, it is!" said the old man. "So it is!"

"It must be made with red and white and have stripes," said the old woman. "It will remind the children of the stripes upon His back, the very wounds that bled the red blood that covers us and make us white as snow."

"Oh, my dear! That is wonderful! You are so clever." replied the old man.

"No," said the old woman, "we asked God to give us ideas. He has. Let us give Him the glory for these wonderful ideas."

"The strong flavor of the peppermint will remind us of His great strength and unconditional love. As it opens our breathing, it will remind us that He gives the Breath of Life for eternity, if we choose to accept it. It is His free gift to us," replied the old woman.



December Birthdays

2— Florine Linkous

18 - Cassie Higgins

25 - Cherice Cleckler

26 - Holly Cannon

27 - Elizabeth Rodriguez & Rachel Ernest (2015)

30 - Mary Nalley

Anniversaries

7th Olan & Kay Suddeth

9th Jim & Ladene Higgins

13th Dexter & Brianna Clark (2016)

27th Bob & Donna Ernest (1964)

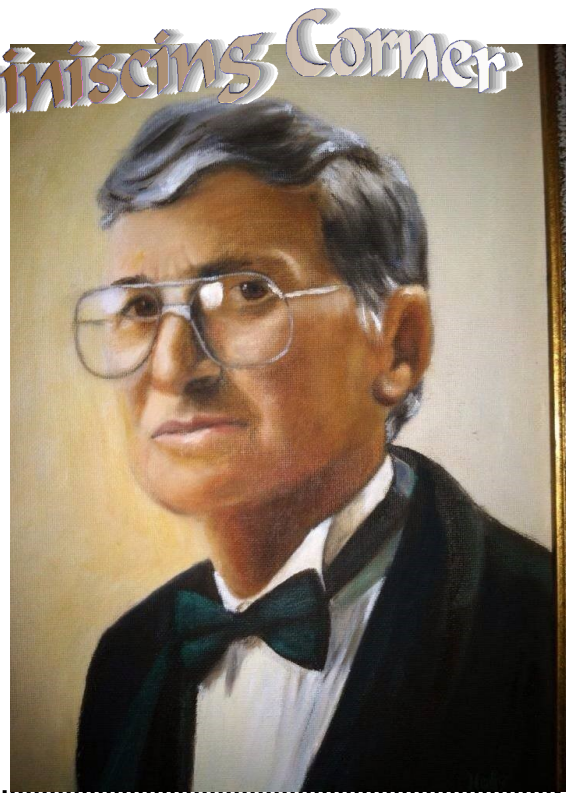
Happy, Happy Birthday to everyone this month. If I don't have your special day, let me know. We want to celebrate with you. Brenda

Tentative Speaker Schedule - December

2nd - Pastor Rodriguez, 9th - Ted Winslow, 16th - Lary Petty, 23rd - Unknown, 30th - Pastor Rodriguez.

David and Mirtes Schmelling were our looking back last month.

This picture looks like maybe his daughter painted it of him. Don't forget to share your pictures with me so we can guess and enjoy what we used to look like. Until then month, Brenda



This time of year reminds me of a little boy. We'll call him "Jimmy".

Jimmy and his parents, along with his little sister, were out shopping for decorations for their home. They exited their vehicle and, as they approached the entrance to the store, they heard the bell and saw the brightly colored Salvation Army man. Jimmy quickly asked his parents for some change to put into the collection bucket. They gave him ninety four cents...three quarters, a dime, a nickel and four pennies, to be exact.

He went to the collection container and dropped the dime, nickel and pennies in the container, BUT HE HELD ONTO THE THREE QUARTERS, thrusting them into his pockets. His parents found out later about his deceit and were, needless to say, very disappointed. Disappointed to the point of being angry. He was punished and, I might add, learned his lesson.

Through the remaining years of his childhood, Jimmy's parents gave him much change during the holidays to donate to the Salvation Army. Each time he would place the money into the container, and each time his parents would ask him, "Are your pockets empty?"

When I think of that account from long ago about a little boy bearing the name of Jimmy, I think about you and I today bearing the name of Christ.

As Christians, do we keep back part of our offerings? Not just in the monetary aspect of it, but what about In our time, talent and service? Do we give all that we have in those areas?

You see, in my life, if I am not careful, I sometimes find myself giving God the dimes, nickels and pennies of my life, while holding onto the quarters. If I am not careful, instead of giving all I can give of myself for the Lord, I find myself "keeping back part".

You know, that thought process applies to all areas of our lives. Prayer and Bible study...are we giving ourselves fully to it? Service...have we surrendered all? That special burden the Lord has laid on our hearts recently...have we kept any quarters? What about our faithfulness and commitment...is it given in pennies and nickels?

Believer, Christ's call has always been to give it all. He wants us to hold nothing back, but rather to place it all in His container. He desires so greatly for you and me to give ourselves wholly and completely to Him.

This time of year reminds me of that story and it reminds me of THE story – that God held nothing back and gave His very best, His only Son. Shouldn't we give our very best to Him? And so, I'll leave you with this question for you to consider this Christmas...

...are your pockets empty?

Submitted by: Luis

Leaping for joy

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby in her womb leaped. She was filled with the Holy Spirit, and sang out exuberantly.....And why am I so blessed that the mother of my Lord visits me? The moment the sound of your greeting entered my ears, the babe in my womb skipped like a lamp for sheer joy. Luke 1:41, 43-44

Dear God, It is Advent again. Have I learned anything from the 365 days You've given me since last Advent? Am I leaping for joy or hiding from shame like Adam and Eve in the Garden? Is there anything blocking my heart from being completely open to You? Are even my volunteer activities keeping me too busy to listen to The Holy Spirit? Are my priorities in balance?

Please teach me to sit still and listen for Your voice. I believe you have already sent the answers to every request, every need and every prayer I will ever have, think or dream. You know the deepest recesses of my heart now and in the future and have already provided all the answers. All I have to do is have faith, find the appropriate words for my prayers and believe You will show me what action to take. It's so simple, yet so difficult to do.

We don't see the blue-ringed octopus glowing in the deep seas or the billions of undiscovered stars, but they were created to glorify You. We were made to praise You!! Every bird song, falling yellow leaf and drop of rain is begging us to notice You. Have I thanked You today for this beautiful place to meet and wait for You? I want to be like an October Alabama fawn kicking up my spotted legs in sheer delight. Come Lord Jesus Come.

It is not my vineyard. It is not my orchard. It is God's orchard and He is the keeper. Jesus Christ is the only true vine and I am but a branch. The Holy Spirit is my GPS and all I have to do is listen to His voice. My only purpose on this earth is to abide on the vine and be willing to be pruned so I can bear fruit. Please prune me today Lord so I can bear fruit. Amen
By Anita Shriberg.....

This is my sister who lives in Prattville. She wrote this for her United Methodist Churches Advent devotional, and said I could share it. I know we all pray regularly BUT do we stop and listen for that small still voice? We discussed this in Sabbath School last week, yes we ask, but then we get up from praying "God's will be done", and go about "How we want it done", not waiting for the answer we just asked God to decide. He might not have wanted us to have it that way or then or never? Yes, that takes faith and patience, waiting on the Lord but that is what God expects of us, isn't it? So next time you pray, wait and listen....

- ◆ Websites Bill Weise has set up & would like special prayer about the responses from these sites.
www.steppingupward.org www.eqwhiteclassicquotes.org <http://www.grandmastidbits.org>
- ◆ We have a website!! <http://clantonsda.org/>, Tony Plier has posted sermons, music & a lot of info, look under Newsletters to find this publication on line each month. Tony has made it so the previous couple years there also. Thanks to all of those that have contributed this month. If I missed a momentous occasion, please send it to me and we will post next month. If I email you and US mail the newsletter, let me know that I can not US Mail to you, I know several want the "hard copy". Until next month, Brenda

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