

Greetings in the glorious name of the babe of Bethlehem,

SCRIPTURE:

Mark 13:10-11 (MSG) – Larger reading: Mark 13:1-13

“The Message has to be preached all across the world. ‘When they bring you, betrayed, into court, don't worry about what you'll say. When the time comes, say what's on your heart - the Holy Spirit will make his witness in and through you.’”

STORY:

Bryan Fink shares the following story: Lee, a reporter for the Chicago Tribune and a self-professed atheist was sitting at his desk on Christmas Eve. A slow news day he found himself reminiscing about the Delgado family that he had featured while writing a series of articles about Chicago's neediest people a few days earlier.

The Delgado's were comprised of a grandmother named Perfecta and her two granddaughters, Jenny age 13 and her sister Lydia 11 years old.

He remembered how unprepared he was when he walked into their two room apartment on the west side of Chicago for the interview; bare halls and bare walls, no furniture, no rugs, nothing but a kitchen table and a handful of rice in the cupboards. He learned during the interview that Jenny and Lydia only had one short-sleeved dress apiece, plus a thin gray sweater that they shared. On cold days when the girls walked the half-mile to school, one of the girls would start with the sweater and then give it to the other at the halfway mark. It was all they had. Perfecta wanted more for her granddaughters and would gladly have worked, but her severe arthritis and age made work too difficult and painful. [L T L]
[SEP:SEP]

Since it was a slow news day Lee decided to check out a car and drive to Chicago's west side to check up on the Delgado's. When Jenny opened the door he couldn't believe what he saw! His article on the Delgado's had touched the hearts of many subscribers who responded with furniture and appliances, rugs, dozens of coats, scarves and gloves. The girls wouldn't have to share a sweater any longer. There were cartons and cartons and boxes of food everywhere. They had so much food that the cupboards and closets couldn't contain it. Someone had even donated a Christmas tree, and under it were mounds of presents and thousands of dollars in cash! [L T L]
[SEP:SEP]

Lee was astonished! But what astonished him the most was what he found Perfecta and her granddaughters doing. They were preparing to give most of it away. "Why would you give so much of this away?" Lee asked. Perfecta responded, "Our neighbors are still in need. We cannot have plenty while they have nothing. This is what Jesus would want us to do." Lee was dumbfounded. [L T L]
[SEP:SEP]

After regaining his composure he asked Perfecta another question. He wanted to know what she and the girls thought about the generosity that was shown to them. Again, Lee was not prepared for the answer. She said, "This is wonderful, this is very good." "We

did nothing to deserve this; it's all a gift from God. But," she added, "it is not his greatest gift, Lee. No, we celebrate that tomorrow. Jesus. "L T L
SEP SEP

Lee was speechless as he drove back to the office. In the quiet of his car he noted a couple of observations. He had plenty and along with it plenty of anxiety, while the Delgado's despite their poverty had peace. Lee had everything and yet wanted more, but the Delgado's had nothing and yet knew generosity. Lee had everything and yet his life was as bare as the Delgado's apartment prior to the article running. And yet the Delgado's who had nothing were filled with hope, contentment and had a spiritual certainty. Even though Lee had so much more than the Delgado's, he longed for what they had in their poverty.

REFLECTION:

Sometimes we just need to be reminded that there is more to the Good News of Christmas than gifts, tinsel, parties and carols. Sometimes we get caught up with all the celebration that we ignore the power of the message of Jesus. It is not what we get, but what we give that truly matters. Sometimes bigger is not better and more doesn't measure a person's wealth. Sometimes it is in the doing that we find the baby of Bethlehem not in the receiving.

Heard of a slight change of the ever popular "Jesus is the reason..." saying. It was this: "You are the reason for the season." God sent his son to us... for our salvation... to take away our sins... to bring us into a living relationship with God. Jesus came so that we could be different... so that our focus would change... our purpose reshaped. God sent Jesus not to get us into heaven, but to get heaven into us – the joy, the love, the grace, the mercy – so that we can unselfishly give of ourselves to others... not out of our abundance, but out of our poverty. God sent Jesus so that we would have a different set of priorities... a different focus... a change of heart... a new commitment.

The Delgado family understood it. Wouldn't it be great if we all did!

QUOTE:

"There is no exercise better for the heart than reaching down and lifting people up." – John Holmes

PRAYER:

Boy, God, it is really obvious that we need a change of attitude and a new focus for this Christmas. We are really out of balance with our priorities and in our understanding. Help us to be captured by the true Christmas message. Please make it sooner than later. We are kind of losing it at this end.

And the faith journey continues, Pastor Jim
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What are your expectations this Christmas?