

The Reason for the Season

Winter in the farmlands of Indiana can sometimes be snowy and bitterly cold. This Christmas eve was no exception. I was only 5 years old, but I remember it well. It was my first recollection of the cherished holiday.

A freshly cut pine tree sat in front room of the small farmhouse, decorated with popcorn strings and other homemade ornaments. But beneath the tree was a conspicuous absence. There were no presents. It had been a difficult year for my dad — a farmer by day, and a factory worker by night. Time and money were both in short supply.

Mother was especially discouraged that Christmas Eve had arrived without any gifts for her three children. She was in tears

when dad got home from work that night. But he brought encouraging news. His boss had given him an unexpected Christmas bonus.

Though the hour was late, my parents were determined to find a way to provide Christmas for the kids. Dad phoned the owner of the dime store in our small, nearby town and explained his situation. In a gesture that would be unheard of today, the merchant actually arose from bed and drove through the drifting snow to meet dad at the store.

All of us were still up when dad got back sometime after midnight. None of the presents were gift wrapped, but it really didn't matter. By now it was Christmas morning, and we were anxious to see what papa Santa had brought us. Besides candy and other things, he had

dolls for my two older sisters, cap-firing six shooters for me, and a new lamp for mom. We kids sat around the Christmas tree, playing and giggling. What had seemed to be a grim Christmas Eve hours earlier, was now long forgotten.

Although just a little boy, this experience gave me several lasting impressions about Christmas. For one thing, though nothing was said, I figured it out by myself — this business about Santa Claus was apparently make-believe. If there was a Santa, his real name was Daddy.

But more significantly, this loving act by my father taught me something about the real values of Christmas. For many years afterward, I would often reflect upon my father's love that inspired him to venture out into the blizzardy night, return-

ing with presents for us, yet nothing for himself. I could still vividly remember his own happiness as he sat nearby, watching as his family enjoyed their toys and gifts.

At this early age, I learned the profound truth that Christmas is really about the joy of giving, not merely receiving. Christmas was created by a loving Heavenly Father, who so loved the world, that He gave us the most noble and sacrificial of all gifts. He sent His own Son, in the form of a babe, gift wrapped in a humble manger, who would give His life as an atonement for our sins.

The real spirit of Christmas is giving, loving, caring and serving — just as our loving Father in Heaven has provided to us.

So let each of us hold dear these values to our hearts, and

use this season as an opportunity to give blessing to others, and to share the love of Christ with our friends and family — for *"Jesus" is the reason for the season.*

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Unless otherwise stated, all scripture references were taken from
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