

### ATTIC TREASURES

I grew up in New England where old colonial and Cape Cod style homes dominated the landscape. And a feature of such homes often was, and is, a full attic. In our house, you walked up to the attic on a full flight of stairs, and except for the spaces by the eaves you could actually stand up without banging your head. It was one of our favorite spots when we played hide n' seek--big boxes and a free-standing mirror made for excellent places to hide! And if you wanted solitude and quiet for an afternoon of reading you could find it there. It was spooky at night and where my father would take us on Halloween to tell ghost stories. My grandfather's sea chest full of memorabilia from World War I was kept in the attic. And it was, of course, where all the Christmas decorations were stored between seasons. Our attic, like many, was filled with treasures: treasured items, and treasured memories as well.

Earlier this month a parishioner shared a lovely story with me about an attic treasure. How in what had been his parents' attic a rather dusty box that contained the American Flyer train he'd received one Christmas many decades ago was discovered anew. It wasn't just any Christmas, though, because he had contracted measles in a time before the measles vaccine. Before getting sick he had seen the train, and desperately wanted it. But he was so sick, he was confined to bed, and was sure he'd miss out on all the wonders Christmas had to offer. Christmas Day came, and while the rest of the family was downstairs, enjoying the festivities, he lay alone in his bed. But then, he heard his footsteps on the stairs, and suddenly appeared in his doorway, crossed over to his bed, and scooped him up into his arms. And then, carried him down the stair to the living room, where under the tree, where the train was set up in all its glory. The very train he had dreamed of having. And in the end, what for a sick young boy, what seemed destined to be a very blue Christmas, turned into one remembered to this day. A Christmas when love was made known in such a wondrous way.

As I've pondered things this second Covid Christmas and reflected on the past two years of struggles and challenges, I have been so incredibly grateful for the many Christmas treasures stored in the attic of my memory. Often thoughts of a special moment from a Christmas past have lifted my spirits as I've had to make decisions about masks and social distancing and sanitizers and all the other concerns we've had to address. I have been buoyed up by those memories, buoyed up by those treasures.

I am also reminded that chief of those attic treasures, is the story we remember each Christmas, pandemic or not, of a time so long ago when God chose to be revealed to us in the birth of a tiny child. It is a story both simple and profound. A story populated by angels and shepherds, an innkeeper, a tired teenaged mother, and her travel weary husband. A story

rich with detail. A stable. A manger. A donkey. And cooing doves. It is a story told round the world on this very night. And even as we hear it again, even as we witness once more the beauty of the tale, even as we imagine the child being scooped up in Joseph's arms and being handed to Mary, we are touched by the love made known on this night.

There are no newborns in this room on this night, nor are there any little boys sick with measles, but perhaps you are in need of a reminder that you are loved. Maybe on this Christmas you need to be scooped up and carried. Maybe you need to be cradled and held. Maybe you long to be treasured and loved.

If that's where you are this night, there is incredibly good news. For in this birth that we celebrate each December 25<sup>th</sup>, God appeared in human flesh and chose to remind us that human beings have inherent worth. That you and I are indeed treasured. Treasured and loved by the Creator of all that is, all that was, all that ever will be. And God stands ready to scoop you up and carry you through the trials of life.

Here in Florida we don't usually have literal attics. No stairs leading up to a space filled with treasures. But we do have the attics of heart and mind. And there, if we are only willing to look, we will find again the greatest treasure Christmas has to offer. Not a box of decorations, not even a brand-new train set, but rather the love made known this night so long ago in Bethlehem. A love that can hold you throughout time and beyond. Indeed, the greatest treasure of all!

Amen

John H. Danner