

"CHRISTMAS FOR A DOLLAR"

It was a hard year for this depression era family. The children lost their mother which left dad alone to raise five children one of which was handicapped. One night at supper one of the girls began to complain about eating depression hash once again. The eldest did her best to make meals as best as possible during this difficult time. The children began to say what their friends would be receiving for Christmas. All of a sudden father with his stern voice, said. "We need to be thankful that we have each other" and quietly left the dinner table. One by one the children began to say, "my shoes can last awhile longer", another said, "I don't really need a new dress". To their surprise father came into the kitchen and said, "everyone into the living room". Father entered the room all dressed up in his Sunday best. The littlest one blurted out, "are we going to church"? "No, son not tonight but I do have an idea for Christmas". He took off his hat and showed his children that there were 6 pieces of paper in his hat with a name on each one. "It's not much but I have been saving some money for awhile now". He opened the tiny tin box and showed them the coins he had been saving. The oldest boy said, "wow father there must be over a dollar in there". "Yes, son there is and it's all for you to spend on one another". "Take what you need for the name you pick from my hat". The crippled boy filled with excitement asked, "can we make something with the talents we have"? "Yes, son that would be wonderful" said father.

At school the teacher told everyone, "this Christmas I would like everyone to do acts of kindness for others and in return the one who does the most will receive this special Christmas box." Little sister had her heart set on receiving that box. In that one room school house there was of course a school bully. Sadly the little girl did not win the box, the bully did. The teacher knowing the plight of this family knew how hard the little girl worked at doing acts of kindness. She asked how it felt to help others. The child responded about how good she felt inside knowing she helped someone else.

Soon it was Christmas morning for this family who had only a dollar for Christmas. Each gift was special like the used baseball mit given that was now like new from using linseed oil and little bit of elbow grease. An angel with a broken wing was given with so much love to father. Used Mechanics Illustrated magazines were given to big brother who wanted to be a mechanic. Father neatly rolled his gift up in a scroll with the promise to help his oldest daughter fulfill her dream to someday become a nurse. Then came the littlest boy's gift to be given to his other sister.

This little lad took seriously his father's words about using wisely the money from that tiny tin box. He went to the hardware store and picked out tools to

buy and put them in a burlap bag. The clerk at the counter said, "I'm sorry but that will cost a lot more than your two nickles. But I'll make you a deal you can rent them for just a nickel and bring them back after you're finished". "Deal", said the little boy and off he went to begin making his Christmas gift.

It was his turn to give his present. Sister was so filled with emotion as she uncovered the sheet. You see the little boy made her a special Christmas box from his talent of woodworking. Tears, joy and laughter filled the room. That one dollar Christmas wasn't quite over yet. A knock on the door was heard by everyone. "Your gift little brother just arrived" said, sister. Everyone ran outside to see the neighbors horse that the little crippled boy so badly wanted to ride. His sister made a deal with a nearby neighbor for a special Christmas ride just for him. What a day, what a Christmas. There was no neatly wrapped gifts under the tree, only used, broken items, even one was wrapped with a promise. There wasn't a table filled with food. But there was on that day the story of Jesus read from the bible and children so happy it filled their home with so much love that no dollar bill could ever buy.

What I just described was from a Christmas movie but it shares what many families still encounter today. Serving here in the inner city we have experienced families with even much less than a dollar for Christmas. Gifts are special and a table filled to the brim with food is wonderful but experiencing the true meaning of Christmas is much more fulfilling.

In November we held our annual bazaar for the inner city, It included all sorts of used and broken items (very well used but with a little bit of work it would become a treasure for someone else) and all sizes of hand me down clothes. We knew with the looks of many mothers and children as they laid out their items on the counter some were destined for Christmas morning. Some may ask why don't we make it a give away bazaar. There is something special if it was worked for and bought with a little sacrifice even if it may just cost a nickel or in our case a peso.

May your Christmas tree be filled with gifts given with an abundance of love.
May your Christmas table be filled with thankfulness and your home be filled with the sound of knowing and singing, "Joy to the world the Lord has come."

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