

Thought for the Day

December 19 – December 23, 2011

December 19, 2011

WHY WAS HE BORN IN A STABLE?

According to the story I heard, there was a Jewish lady named Mrs. Rosenberg who some years ago tried to get a room at a fashionable hotel on Cape Cod, a place where some businesses excluded Jewish persons. The desk clerk said to her, “Sorry, we’re all booked up.” “But,” she said, “Your sign out front says that you have vacancies.” The clerk stammered a bit and then said rather curtly, “We do not accept Jewish persons. I’ll be glad to suggest another hotel for you.”

Mrs. Rosenberg stiffened noticeably and said, “It may surprise you to know that I have converted to the Christian faith.” The clerk replied, “Oh yeah? Let me give you a little test. What were the circumstances of Jesus’ birth?”

Mrs. Rosenberg said, “He was born in a stable in a village called Bethlehem. His mother was a virgin named Mary.” “Very good,” said the clerk. “Why was he born in a stable?” Mrs. Rosenberg replied rather loudly, “Because a jerk like you wouldn’t give a Jewish lady a room for the night!”

December 20, 2011

A DISHWASHER FOR CHRISTMAS

Judy Rogers of Westerville, Ohio remembered from her childhood a very special Christmas. Her Dad had been laid off from his jobs months earlier. Nevertheless, he gave his wife a dishwasher for Christmas, but not the kind you think. But let Judy tell the story:

“Our old house had its original wiring and plumbing. Neither could handle a new appliance. In fact, there was no room in our tiny kitchen for anything new. Dad had not been able to make the

mortgage payments for six months. Mom had had major surgery the previous spring and was not supposed to do any work that involved her arms. On that Christmas morning, there was no large box beneath the tree. No remodeling had occurred. No new plumbing had been installed. Instead, there was just a small note that appeared on a branch of our Christmas tree, in Dad's handwriting. It said, 'For one year I will wash all the dirty dishes in this household, every single one.' And he did!"

December 21, 2011

*L*ONG WALK PART OF GIFT

A missionary was teaching in Africa. Before Christmas he had explained to his native students how Christians, as an expression of their joy, give one another presents on Jesus' birthday. On Christmas morning, one of the natives brought the missionary a seashell of lustrous beauty. When asked where he had discovered such an extraordinary shell, the native said that he had walked many miles to a certain bay, the only spot where such shells could be found.

"I think it was wonderful of you to travel so far to get this lovely gift for me," the teacher exclaimed. The native, his eyes brightening, said, "Long walk part of gift."

December 22, 2011

*T*HE WORD BECAME FLESH

There is a Chinese restaurant in Memphis that has a large, first-class aquarium. It contains a glorious assortment of tropical fish with colors so extraordinary that only God could have decorated them. It takes lots of work to have an aquarium. The owner monitors the oxygen and nitrate levels and the ammonia content of the water. Vitamins, antibiotics, and sulfa drugs must be pumped in. The fish have to be fed regularly. Now with all that care and attention, you would think that the fish would adore the owner. But they don't. Anytime he comes around, they dart away in fear. The owner is like a god to those fish, too big to comprehend, too frightening to love.

The only way to change their understanding would be for the owner to somehow become a fish in order to communicate the truth to the fish. Similarly, God had to become a person in order for us to truly understand God's love for us. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us...full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

December 23, 2011

*R*UBBING OFF ON EACH OTHER

William H. Hinson, the late great Methodist preacher, was reared on a farm in rural Georgia. He claimed that his home was so rural that he had to go toward town to hunt. Bill remembered that occasionally they had to catch all the hogs on the farm and apply an awful-smelling concoction that kept some of the ticks and fleas off of them. Bill's father would always say, "Boys, put an extra dose on every hog you catch, because you won't be able to catch all of them. But sooner or later the ones you catch will rub up against the others and we'll spread the stuff around."

During the Christmas season, people are often together for worship, parties, and shopping. Some people are so burdened with trouble, grief, and heartbreak that they have little if any Christmas joy. Those of us who have been richly blessed must allow some of God's grace to "rub off" on the others.

St. Paul expressed this mandate as follows: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God" (II Cor. 1:3-4).