



The Outer Leaf

Live Oaks
Community Church

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"Leading edge news and views of the ministries of Live Oaks Community Church"

Christmas Surprises At Any Time

Almost two weeks before Christmas our door bell rang in the middle of the day during the week. I was not expecting anyone and wondered who might be at our door... I hurriedly finished an email at my computer and went up stairs to see who it might be. No one was there, but only a tall box sitting against the wall in our porch. Bringing the box into the front room, I opened it to find a beautiful sculpted plant in a red tin pot with a big ribbon on it. I wondered, "Who mailed us a plant like this? Had to be someone in the greater Wichita area..." After searching around the box I found the shipping and handling print out. The gift did not come from somebody close - it was from Jodi's brother on the coast in California. In past years when our children were younger we would exchange family gifts and treats, but in recent years simply a card. This gift was an unexpected surprise! And what surprised me even more was how it touched my heart, lifted my spirits, and brought a smile to my face!

Joseph and Mary must have felt something like this when the Magi showed up with gifts approximately two years after the first Christmas. The birth of Christ was a wonderful event for them, their family and the world. Angels singing in the sky, shepherds rallying the community and bragging on the identity and purpose of their firstborn, and the fulfillment of Gabriel, the arch angels, promise to a virgin and a righteous husband! However, as the ensuing weeks and months went on life settled down and the great celebration of that most holy night was replaced by the common weekly grind of routine and responsibilities. They became in many respects a normal family as Jesus grew into a toddler.

Then one day all the normalcy changed! Magi (holy men) from a far off country in the east, who had followed for almost a year and a half the star that announced Christ

birth, suddenly show up on Joseph, Mary and Jesus doorstep. They brought gifts, they proclaimed anew Jesus' identity and purpose as the prophesied King of the Jews, they bowed down and worshipped Him - and the Christmas celebration began again! What a surprise to receive gifts from far off in the east... What a surprise that others in distant land cared about them, their Son, and the purpose He would fulfill... They not only cared enough to send gifts but put their lives on hold and came themselves to deliver those gifts! What a surprise!



I marvel at how fast things can change in the life and how fast God can bring His promises to fulfillment when everything is in place and His process is complete. I pray that as the luster of this past Christmas holiday wanes and you begin to anticipate another year of work and ministry, you don't forget to look for God's surprise gifts He is bringing your way. He loves you, and so do others! He has a plan for your life, and others both near and far see it too! He wants you to stay encouraged as you stay in His process of fulfilling His promise and plan through you. There will come a time when God will confirm His love and purpose - and your season of change will be upon you! Lord bless you as you keep looking for Christmas surprises, receive them, and let them touch your heart, lift your spirits, and bring a smile to your face! I wonder how many surprises and gifts God has in store for you in 2009...?

"On coming to the house, they saw the Child with His mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped Him. Then they opened their treasures and presented Him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh."

Lord bless your 2009 - "Happy New Year!"

Pastor Kelley

Happy New Year!!!

The Three Trees

Once there were three trees on a hill in the woods. They were discussing their hopes and dreams when the first tree said,

'Someday I hope to be a treasure chest. I could be filled with gold, silver and precious gems. I could be decorated with intricate carving and everyone would see the beauty.'

Then the second tree said, 'Someday I will be a mighty ship. I will take kings and queens across the waters and sail to the corners of the world. Everyone will feel safe in me because of the strength of my hull.'

Finally the third tree said, 'I want to grow to be the tallest and straightest tree in the forest. People will see me on top of the Hill and look up to my branches, and think of the heavens and God and how close to them I am reaching. I will be the greatest tree of all time and people will always remember me.'

After a few years of praying that their dreams would come true, a group of woodsmen came upon the trees. When one came to the first tree he said, 'This looks like a strong tree, I think I should be able to sell the wood to a carpenter, and he began cutting it down. The tree was happy, because he knew that the carpenter would make him into a treasure chest.'

At the second tree the woodsman said, 'This looks like a strong tree. I should be able to sell it to the shipyard.' The second tree was happy because he knew he was on his way to becoming a mighty ship.

When the woodsmen came upon the third tree, the tree was frightened because he knew that if they cut him down his dreams would not come true. One of the Woodsmen said, 'I don't need anything special from my tree, I'll take this one,' and he cut it down.

When the first tree arrived at the carpenters, he was made into a feed box for animals. He was then placed in a barn and filled with hay. This was not at all what he had prayed for.

The second tree was cut and made into a small fishing boat. His dreams of being a mighty ship and carrying kings had come to an end.

The third tree was cut into large pieces, and left alone in the dark.

The years went by, and the trees forgot about their dreams.

Then one day, a man and woman came to the barn. She gave birth and they placed the baby in the hay in the feed box that was made from the first tree. The man wished that he could have made a crib for the baby, but this manger would have to do. The tree could feel the importance of this event and knew

that it had held the greatest treasure of all time.

Years later, a group of men got in the fishing boat made from the second tree. One of them was tired and went to sleep. While they were out on the water, a great storm arose and the tree didn't think it was strong enough to keep the men safe. The men woke the sleeping man, and He stood and said 'Peace' and the Storm stopped. At this time, the tree knew that it had carried the King of Kings in its boat.

Finally, someone came and got the third tree. It was carried through the streets as the people mocked the man who was carrying it. When they came to a stop, the man was nailed to the tree and raised in the air to die at the top of a hill. When Sunday came, the tree came to realize that it was strong enough to stand at the top of the hill and be as close to God as was possible, because Jesus had been crucified on it.

The moral of this story is that when things don't seem to be going your way, always know that God has a plan for you. If you place your trust in Him, God will give you great gifts.

Each of the trees got what they wanted, just not in the way they had imagined.

We don't always know what God's plans are for us. We just know that His ways are not our ways, but His ways are always best.



REMINDER!!

Please remember we will be meeting at Peterson Elementary on Sunday, January 4th at 10am. Peterson is located at 9710 W. Central. Directions to Peterson are take Central, about ½ mile West, past Tyler Rd. Peterson is on the North side of Central, just West of the Dairy Queen.

We will resume our normal Sunday morning services back at Kensler Elementary on Sunday, January 11th!!

Any questions, please see the website at www.liveoaks.org or call the church office at 773-4400!



Don't Miss