

A Miracle at Christmas

The miracle of Christmas? The incarnation of Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, as the unfolding of our Lord's plan to offer His grace and redemption to a lost and dying world. Such an event is not explicable in natural or scientific laws.

And God continues to use Christmas to perform other miracles. Dr. Timothy M. Smith, senior pastor of Munholland United Methodist Church in Metairie, Louisiana, tells about one of them.

A brand-new pastor and his wife were assigned to their first church in Brooklyn and were to reopen it. They arrived in early October excited about their opportunities. When they saw the church building, it was run down and needed a lot of work. They set a goal to have everything done in time to have their first service on Christmas Eve.

They worked hard, repairing pews, plastering walls, painting, and on Dec. 18, they were ahead of schedule and just about finished. On Dec. 19, however, a terrible, driving rainstorm hit the area and lasted for two days. After the rain stopped, the pastor went over to the church. His heart sank when he saw that the roof had leaked, causing a large area of plaster about 20 feet by 8 feet to fall off the front wall of the sanctuary, just behind the pulpit. He cleaned up the mess on the floor and decided to postpone the Christmas Eve service.



On the way home, he noticed that a local business was having a garage sale for charity, so he stopped in. One of the items was a beautiful, handmade, ivory colored, crocheted tablecloth with exquisite work, fine colors and a cross embroidered right in the center. It was just the right size to cover up the hole in the front wall. He bought it and headed back to the church.

By that time, it had started to snow. An older woman, running from the opposite direction, was trying to catch the bus. She missed it. The pastor invited her to wait in the warm sanctuary for the next bus, which would arrive 45 minutes later.

She sat in a pew and paid no attention to the pastor while he got a ladder and hung the tablecloth as a wall tapestry. The pastor could hardly believe how beautiful it looked, and it covered up the entire problem area perfectly.

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Then he noticed the woman walking down the center aisle. Her face was like a sheet. “Pastor,” she asked, “where did you get that tablecloth?”

The pastor explained. The woman asked him to check the lower right corner to see if the initials, EBG, were crocheted into it there. They were. These were the initials of the woman, and she had made this tablecloth 35 years before in Austria.

The woman explained that before World War II, she and her husband were living in Austria. When the Nazis came, she was forced to leave. Her husband was going to follow her the next week, but he was captured, sent to prison, and she never saw her husband or her home again. The pastor wanted to give her the tablecloth, but she told him to keep it for the church.

The pastor insisted on driving her home, which was the least he could do. She lived on the other side of Staten Island and was only in Brooklyn for the day for a housekeeping job.

On Christmas Eve, the church was almost full. The music and the spirit were great. At the end of the service, the pastor and his wife greeted everyone at the door and many said they would return. One older man from the neighborhood continued to sit in one of the pews and stared. The pastor wondered why he wasn’t leaving.

The man asked him where he got the tablecloth on the front wall. The pastor explained, and then the man said it was identical to one that his wife had made years ago when they lived in Austria before the war, and he wondered how there could be two tablecloths so much alike.

He told the pastor that when the Nazis came, he forced his wife to flee for her safety, and he was supposed to follow her but was arrested and put in a prison. He never saw his wife or his home again.

The pastor then asked if he would allow him to take the man for a little ride. They drove to Staten Island, to the same house where the pastor had taken the woman three days earlier. He helped the man climb the three flights of stairs to the woman’s apartment, knocked on the door, and that day, he saw the greatest Christmas reunion he could ever imagine as this husband and wife embraced each other for the first time in 35 years.

Is God still in the miracle-working business? He is, and He delights in it.

Each of us, in one way or another, has experienced the manifestation of His miracles, whether it be the birth of a baby, a recovery from a life-threatening illness against all odds, financial relief at some point when it appeared there could be none, or – most importantly – when a life is surrendered to God through faith in Jesus Christ, assuring that soul of eternal life.

Miracles? They are all about us. At Christmas and every day.

– Beecher Hunter

