

WHAT EYESIGHT WAS WORTH

Some years ago in a Midwestern town, a little boy was born blind. His mother and father were heartsick, but they struggled with his blindness the best they could.

Like all such parents, they prayed and hoped for some miracle. They wanted so much for their son to be able to see.

Then one day, when the little boy was 5 years old, the community doctor told them that he had heard about a surgeon at Massachusetts General Hospital who was specializing in a new surgical procedure that might just work for their son, that might just give their little boy his eyesight.

The parents became excited at the prospect, but when they investigated further and discovered the cost of the surgery and the travel and the hospital expense involved, they became deflated because they were not people of means at all. In fact, some would call them poor.

Word got out in the community, however, and their church rallied to help them. In a short period of time, the money was raised to send them to Boston for the surgery.

On the morning they were to leave for Boston, the little boy gathered his things, including his tattered little teddy bear. It had an ear chewed off, was missing an eye and was bursting at the seams. His mother said, "Son, why don't you leave that old teddy bear at home? He's about worn out. Maybe we can buy you a new one in Boston or when we get back."

But the boy said, "No, I need it."

So off to Boston they went. He held tightly to that teddy bear all the way. The surgeon sensed how important the teddy bear was to the little boy, so he allowed the boy to keep the bear with him throughout all the many examinations prior to surgery. On the morning of the surgery, the hospital staff brought in two surgical gowns, one for the boy and a smaller version for the teddy bear, and off to the operating room they went – a little boy on a stretcher holding on dearly to his beloved teddy bear.

The surgery went well. The doctor felt good about what they were able to accomplish. "I think he will be able to see," said the surgeon to the parents, "but we won't know for sure until we remove the bandages in a few days."

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Finally, the day came for the doctor to take off the bandages. The nurses and interns stood with the parents as the surgeon slowly unwound the gauze from the boy's eyes.

Miracle of miracles: The little boy could see! For the first time in his life, he saw his mother's face, he saw his dad and his doctor, he saw flowers and candy and balloons and the people gathered around who had cared for him. And for the first time in his life, he saw his teddy bear. It was a joyous celebration!

When it came time for the boy to leave the hospital, his surgeon came into the room. The doctor had grown so attached to the little boy that he had to busy himself with those insignificant gestures we use when we are trying to surmount a great wall of emotion. They said their goodbyes with tears of joy all around, and then the doctor turned to leave. The little boy called him back.

'Doctor,' he said, 'I want you to have this.' He was holding out the teddy bear. The doctor tried to refuse, but the boy insisted.

'Doctor, I don't have any money. So, I want to give you my teddy bear to pay you for helping me to see. I want you to have it. It's my way of saying thanks.' The doctor took the teddy bear and shook the little boy's hand and wished him well.

For a long time after that – on the 10th floor of the White Building of Massachusetts General Hospital – there was on display a teddy bear bursting at the seams with a chewed-off ear and one eye. Underneath it was a sign written by the hand of the surgeon that read: *This is the highest fee I have ever received for professional services rendered.*

That little boy was so thrilled that he now could see. In response, he gave away his most prized possession. There is a name for that; it's called thanks-giving.

And it touches and teaches us the beauty, the power, the importance and the necessity of gratitude.

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter