

Bermudian Church of the Brethren

WEDNESDAY'S WORD – a midweek thought from Pastor Larry M. Dentler
to share a word of inspiration ... encouragement ... challenge ... a smile ... in the middle of your week
December 20 in the year of our Lord 2017 - 721 third week of Advent

Simply Christmas

It was Christmas 1989. I was pastor of the North Liberty (IN) Church of the Brethren. While for a number of years it appeared as though Cathy & I would not be able to have children, this Christmas found us with two babies – John (5 months) and Jessie (20 months). We had purchased our Christmas tree well ahead of when we knew we'd be able to decorate it. It was simply a matter of scheduling. I put the tree into its stand and brought it into the living room, and for over a week it remained undecorated. One morning I came downstairs early, before the rest of the family was awake. A casual glance at our bare tree ... I began to laugh at what I saw. There hanging on one of the tree's branches was a little white comb, hung there by little Jessie. To Cathy & me the comb was the most beautiful Christmas decoration ever! We seriously considered leaving the tree with only the comb, but finally opted to decorate the tree as usual but leave the unusual decoration in the midst of all the other tree decorations.

What we noticed however was that with the full complement of decorations, the pretty little white comb got lost in the glitter. And I think there is a lesson there!

It is pretty easy for us to allow the simple beautiful truth of the Christmas Story to get lost in all the "glitter" the world adds to Christmas. It is not even that many of the things we've added to Christmas are bad or evil ... they can just crowd out the simple truth.

Many of our Bermudian brothers & sisters have been recently sharing in small group home Bible studies considering Romans 12. The "call" of Romans 12:2 was one of the very influential Scriptures upon the shaping of the people called "Brethren."

"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will." Romans 12:2 NIV

Or ... as paraphrased in the Message,

"Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what He wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you." Romans 12:2 Message

This Christmas ... it's not too late to make some real efforts to celebrate Christmas "simply" ... and follow that strong inclination of our Brethren ancestors to live by Romans 12:2. It really

could make all the difference in the world! Let the simple ... but profoundly wonderful ... beautiful truth of Christmas live in your heart & life!

There is a wonderful old hymn by the Shakers – an 18th century religious group that had broken off from the English Society of Friends (Quakers) to live communally and with a very simple lifestyle & lively worship style.

'Tis a gift to be simple, 'tis a gift to be free, 'Tis a gift to come down where we ought to be, And when we find ourselves in the place just right, 'Twill be in the valley of love and delight. When true simplicity is gained, To bow and to bend we shan't be ashamed, To turn, turn will be our delight, Till by turning, turning we come 'round right.

“Simple Gifts” by Elder Joseph Brackett (1797-1882)

Allow the words of the old hymn to lead you into conversation with the Lord who loves you so....

Wishing you & yours a Simply Wonderful Christmas!
Pastor Larry <><