St. Timothy
LUTHERAN CHURCH
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2011 Christmas Message from Pastor Groce

Small gifts - forgotten gifts - and the joy of being a packrat.

Gifts come in unexpected ways sometimes. They come unbidden and unsought... but they come nonetheless. I was reading an old Bible of mine today and received the first gift. The inscription on the fly leaf was in my mother's handwriting from Christmas 1984. That in itself was a pleasant gift.

But tucked inside the Bible (which I used through part of Seminary) was an old bulletin from the Second Sunday of Advent - 1985 (this is the joy of being a packrat part). What an amazing gift that was! Unbidden and unsought - names, people, places and events came flooding back. Little snippets of life I had not thought about in far too long. People now in the Church Triumphant - classmates, professors - people once again a part of my Christmas celebration 2011. It is a gift: unbidden and unsought. And yet a gift which comes with power and brilliance.

Not a bad metaphor for the Christmas experience. As a culture we spend so much time, energy and money on the trappings that we run the risk of overlooking the gift itself: Jesus Christ. It is a gift which comes to us unbidden and unsought – it is a gift which comes with power and brilliance. God acted without our input on the first Christmas experience and doesn't require any help now. We did not put Christ into that Christmas and we do not put Christ into Christmas now. God does that.

We receive and we respond. We receive the unmerited and undeserved gift of Grace - we receive God's gift of Love - we receive God moving to claim us.... and we respond. We do not possess - we do not dictate nor do we control. We receive - we respond and we rejoice.

And the angel said to them, *"Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people, for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (NAS, 1975).*

That is the reality in which we live. That is the gift we receive: unbidden and unsought, yet coming to us with power and brilliance. That is the gift we share! Receive - respond - rejoice.

Merry Christmas!

Pastor Groce

650 E. Main St. • Hendersonville, TN 37075 • 615.824-6244 phone • 615-826-5474 fax
info@sttimothyonline.org • www.sttimothyonline.org