

The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Psalm 23

Thomas was heartbroken when his father died in the war. His mother had to sell their house and the two of them went to live with her sister. When Jonathan had to choose things to take with him, his first choice was the Christmas people, the nativity set that he and his father loved. Jonathan was heartbroken again when he left the nativity set at the train station and it disappeared.

Have you ever lost something of great sentimental value? What did it represent to you?

Thomas was angry because of the things he had to leave behind; his home, his friends, and his childhood. His mother said that their life would be good again. She started to add, "I promise..." when Thomas exploded in anger listing all the promises that other people hadn't kept, including his father's promise that he would come home again safely. "I hate grown-up promises," he shouted.

Has anyone promised you something they didn't do? Have you made promises you didn't keep?

Thomas' mother wanted to get a new nativity set. She arranged for Jonathan Toomey, the town recluse who was also a woodcarver, to make the set. When he agreed she asked if Thomas could watch. Although Mr. Toomey wasn't pleased about it, he finally agreed. When Thomas' mother instructed him on not annoying Mr. Toomey, Thomas replied, "I think he pretends to be more grumpy than he is."

Mr. Toomey kept people at a distance to protect himself emotionally. How do you protect yourself?

When Mr. Toomey carved the first piece, a sheep, Thomas wanted it to look happy. Mr. Toomey questioned why sheep would be happy, to which Thomas replied, "Because they were with the baby, Jesus." Although the question annoyed Mr. Toomey, he pondered how to make the sheep look happy. Thomas continued by telling why each member of the nativity set was important, giving honor to Christ at Christmas. Mr. Toomey said Christmas was pish-posh. What does Christmas mean to you?

When the soldiers returned home Thomas was sad because his father would never return. He worried that no one would remember him. Mr. Toomey comforted him by saying warmly, "You do." Mr. Toomey let Thomas sit closer when he carved. He also began to let Thomas into his heart. Mr. Toomey was finally able to trust Thomas because knew they both had experienced grief at the loss of someone they loved.

Has there been a time when you had a hard time gaining someone else's trust? What did you do about it?

When Thomas talked too much Mr. Toomey said, "Has no one ever taught you about the value of silence." Thomas answered, "My mother did." "What did she say?" Mr. Toomey asked. Thomas replied, "She said she hoped I would learn it from you." Thomas' mother showed respect for Mr. Toomey when she wanted her son to be like him. Is there someone who has had a positive impact on your life? Thank them.

Dear Lord, help us to learn the value of silence as we listen to You. Take away our anxiety and fear so that we can truly trust in You for all things. Make us aware of the times when we speak too much without listening to what others are saying. When we carry grief and pain in our hearts fill us with Your healing love. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.