

Magic in the Messy

“In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger
...”
Luke 2:1-7

The scene is pretty much the same after each Christmas celebration and this year was no different.

After hosting family gatherings on Christmas Day. We gave out our last hugs and waved goodbye as each person drove out of sight. Returning to the family room and eyeing the spoils of the day all I could think was, “What a mess.”

Bags of torn paper from those once neatly wrapped gifts. Stacks of dishes in and around the sink with remnants of our feast. Who knows what dried on the counter and those mysterious spots on the floor. Extra chairs pushed about to accommodate all. Trash cans overflowing and random items left behind (a toy, a jacket, a gift that wouldn't fit in the car). A new water ring on the table. What a mess.

All of that planning and preparing – the anticipation – and in a few hours it's over leaving a mess to be cleaned. A good deal of time is spent cleaning, rearranging, and putting things back in order. If I'm not careful, it's easy to get lost in the tossed aside tinsel. To wonder if it's all worth it. To focus on how tired I am and doubt that extra effort really made a difference.

That first Christmas was pretty messy too. Everyone had to travel to their “own town” to register for the census. (Today ours is done electronically and we still find that challenging.) Throw into the story a young man with his betrothed who is pregnant. (Scandalous.) And then a manger as a baby bed. (Not an ideal setting, especially for our Savior.) What a mess.

I am sure on more than one occasion Mary, Joseph, and their families thought, “But I had other plans ... I thought this would be different ... Is it worth it ... What a mess.”

Over the years, I’ve learned to look past the messy and find the magic. The magic of family and friendships. The magic of time well spent in the company of loved ones. The magic of the laughter of the young and the smiles of the old. The magic seen through the eyes of child. The magic of the baby in the manger who came to save us.

After reading Luke 2:1-7, look past the mess and find the magic – the miracle. The miracle revealed when the angel announced to the shepherds ... “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” (Luke 2:10-12)

Life for today is the same as long ago. We have to train ourselves to look past the mess, find the magic, and expect the miracles. The miracle found in a family reunited or a good medical report or the gift of another ordinary day. Miracles come in all shapes and sizes. All we have to do is listen and look.

Today and every day - Embrace the mess. Find the magic. Expect the miracle.