



The Christmas Homily
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“What have I to give? We may not be asking because we have nothing ready for the holidays, but rather, we may be aware on some level that what we are giving does not quite rise up to our deepest potential to give” -- Reverend David Blanchard

When I was a child I wanted a miracle on this evening. I probably would have settled for my parents not fighting over how to set up the Christmas tree (a Christmas Eve tradition in my family). Year after year I waited. My heart was open and I wanted something good to fall in. Maybe like you, I was waiting for a miracle from someone or something else. I didn't know that I was the miracle I was waiting for.

Our potential to give is not always measured by money, it is more often measured by heart, like Samuel Stone. Sure he gave away money, but he gave it away with heart. He did not give all this money to his family. He did not give it to himself. He wasn't even Christian. He did not give in the name of Jesus Christ, or to please Jesus in the season Christians celebrate his birth. But he understood the heart of this season. My guess is that what he gave, gave him great joy and it was miraculous for everyone involved, including Mr. Samuel J. Stone.

Mr. Stone gave money, but more importantly, he gave hope, companionship, compassion, and kindness. He gave without knowing the outcome or recipient of the money, and he gave without needing to let others know what he had done. He gave without knowing if the recipients were telling the truth. He just released gifts into this world.

Perhaps we need to release ourselves to give gifts - the kind you can't buy, to others – and see what miraculously falls into our hearts in return. Or, if you are someone in

deep pain, can you give yourself a gift in this season of the heart. Can you give yourself the greatest possible kindness and compassion this season – the kind you would gladly give a child you found alone, crying in the rain? Do that for yourself. You are worth it. You are that precious and your pain is that large.

And the rest of us. What sort of gifts could we release ourselves to give and receive? How about forgiveness? I know that someone here is holding a grudge, perhaps several, against a friend, family member, co-worker, neighbor? Could you let it go? Just release it, and release your self so that something good may fall in. I am not talking about a crime of deep injustice like abuse. We forgive on our own time with those, if at all. If you are struggling with an injury that deep, give yourself the gift of kindness in this season of heart

I am talking about all the other dramas that ease out with time, the friend who stiffed you, the boss who fired you, the family member who never calls. Forgive that person and yourself. Let it go so something better may fall inside.

Does your deepest potential to give include love? Can you love yourself? Can you be kind to yourself if you have put on weight, lost a job, feel depressed? Can you say the words “I love you” to another (as David Blanchard goes on to suggest). Is there someone starving to hear those words from you? Now is the season. How about love to strangers? One writer, Dani Shapiro offers this silent meditation to everyone she passes “May you be safe, may you be happy.” What a beautiful way to give to others, strangers, from a place of deepest potential. We have not nearly reached our deepest potential of love.

Can you give some kindness? Can you help (without recriminations and the “evil eye”) the parent whose screaming child throws up on the airplane? Can you help the Ukrainian woman in the post office line who does not speak good English and can’t figure out how to send her package? Can you call or write someone who might be alone? Can you buy shoes for someone who has none?

This is a big, busy world. In this congregation someone just learned she is miscarrying. Someone just saw a family member go to jail. Someone has no place to go for Christmas. Someone just learned a loved one is terminally ill. Someone is struggling with thoughts of suicide. What are we waiting for? What are we waiting for? Open your heart and release the deepest potential of giving for yourself and others. In your quest for yourself, open your heart and give from your place of deep potential. Be that miracle you hope to see in compassion for and with yourself and others. Find a message of joy in what you give away, and relish the miracle of giving until it feels good. May the blessing of gift giving in this season fall gently upon each and everyone one of you.