

A Christmas Miracle

By Linda Marie

The fifty nine year old widow stared at the bleak landscape out her window. The last remaining fall leaves blew briskly in the wind scattering them across her yard. The lawn was brown and uninviting; the dark approaching quickly. Her porch light was out so there wouldn't be any light to escape the darkness creeping onto her porch. Shutting her blinds, she turned on the light to fill the room with brightness, but it didn't reach the corners of her heart. Her husband died of cancer barely two years ago, and now her only daughter was killed in a tragic car accident the day before. Her two young grandchildren were now in her care. The ache in her heart overwhelmed her with a sorrow she couldn't bear.

Karen sighed as she sat heavily in her chair. The two children watched TV in the den, while she brooded over how she was going to manage. It was two weeks before Christmas and she had very little money. They had just lost their mother, their world turned upside down, and now they would learn there's no Santa because she couldn't provide. Her daughter was a single mom with no dad in the picture. When she talked to Pastor Bob about the

funeral, he said the church would provide Christmas. She grimaced. A few presents under the tree is better than nothing she thought.

“God, where are You?” Karen muttered under her breath, as she went to check on her grandchildren. She felt alone and forsaken.

.....

Darby greeted the people in her Sunday school class warmly as she found her seat. Lack of sleep made her feel haggard, but she tried not to show it. Usually she loved the Christmas season, but she was feeling more alone and useless as time went on. She pondered in her heart how she could be of use to God when she had nothing to give. At that moment the purple donation bag reached her. She reached into her wallet and put in all she had. She passed the bag on.

“I’m going to wait to put in money for the widow whose daughter just passed away.” whispered Sarah, passing the bag on.

“Oh, I want to help the widow!” exclaimed Darby. Her heart sank as she realized she had nothing left to give. The bag was making its way around the room. *Maybe I can get part of my money so I have something for the widow* thought Darby. *Wasn’t there anything she could do?* Her attention turned to Shelley who had an announcement to make.

“Our class has been asked to provide Christmas for a widow in our church whose daughter was killed in a car accident, leaving two young children in her care.” Shelley cleared her throat and went on, “Pastor Bob said the church will provide Christmas, so whatever we can’t do, he will ask another class to help also.”

Shelley looked at the class with a smile. She knew the answer before she asked the question. Heart and Soul was the most compassionate class she knew. “Do we want to adopt this family for Christmas?” In unison, the entire class murmured their consent. “I will pass the purple donation bag around a second time. All the funds in it will go to the widow and her grandchildren.”

Darby looked delighted as the bag went around again. All the money she gave would now go to the widow. She silently thanked God for the little way He allowed her to help.

“Do we have volunteers to shop for this family?” Shelley continued. “We need a shopping committee.”

“I will!” Darby’s hand shot up, along with two other women.

“Ok, Darby, Sarah, and Carrie can meet after class and decide when you will go.”

Darby's spirit rose within her battered soul. Maybe she didn't have money, but she had time to help make this Christmas brighter for the bereaved widow and her precious grandchildren.

.....

Karen felt the tears escaping as she quietly pulled the door closed to her grandchildren's room. Their tears at not seeing their mama cut into her heart like a knife slicing away any peace and joy she had. How could she cope with her grandkids grief and questions when she couldn't cope with her own? Her loss was great, the future questionable, and Christmas a looming threat. Thank God she had a home, but she barely made ends meet. How would she provide Christmas for these two sweet grandbabies? Pastor Bob's words echoed in her mind.

"Our church would like to provide Christmas for you." Pastor Bob said sincerely.

What did that mean? A meal? A few gifts? Karen's heart was grateful for anything to help. Brianne wanted a bike though. Maybe she could go to Salvation Army and get a used one. At least Joey was too young to understand. The Dollar Store would have a few things for him.

"God, I believe you answer prayers." Karen whispered the words aloud. "Please, I know material things don't matter. But in all the loss we have, can

these two babies have a good Christmas? I don't care about me, Lord. But please, they just lost their mama. Just a bike and a truck.... I pray in Jesus Holy name, Amen." Karen wiped her tears as a peace settled over her. All she could do was trust God, even if she didn't understand His ways.

.....

Darby waited in the entrance of the store for her friends. She was ready with the class donations, clothing and shoe sizes of the children, their ages (7 & 2), and that they wanted a bike and a car or truck. She was ready! Darby loved children and looked forward to helping get age appropriate toys and clothing to make their Christmas brighter.

"Hi Darby," Sarah gave a quick hug, and they discussed what they wanted to get the young children, while waiting for Carrie.

"Hey, you all!" Carrie came in, beaming. "I've been to Beall's at their close out sale! You should see what I got the grandmother!" She gushed on about her finds.

Darby and Sarah grinned, "That's so awesome!" They nodded in approval. Now, to shop for the kids.

The first thing was a bike and a riding toy for the little boy. A Schwinn bicycle and mermaid helmet was placed up front while the toddler riding car was put in the basket. A baby doll, play diaper bag and extra doll clothes for

the girl and various vehicles for the boy added to the cart's bulk. Then came clothes, pajamas and shoes.

"Look at these leggings." Darby and Sarah added up what they were spending. "Maybe we should get these instead of the more expensive jeans?"

"Yea, then we can get more." Sarah agreed. They coordinated several outfits to match, so proud of their thriftiness. Darby went to return the more expensive items.

"What are you doing?" Carrie asked, returning from the boys' section where she had put several adorable outfits in her cart.

"Oh, we found some less expensive clothes so we can get more, so I'm putting this back." Darby looked regretfully at the really cute jeans she had chosen earlier.

"Let me see them." Carrie took the jeans and put them in her cart. Darby looked at her questioningly. "My donation."

Darby grinned, "Do you want the adorable top to go with it?"

"Of course," Carrie smiled, and put the tossed aside items in her cart. She was determined that these kids would have a wonderful Christmas.

"Look at these puzzles and craft kits I found." Sarah held up the new items as they all met. The cart was filled with goodies! Wow! The women

smiled happily as they saw the bountiful blessing they were able to get from the generosity of the Sunday school class.

“You know, we need to take pictures so the class can see what they did with their generous donations.” Darby said, thoughtfully.

“I agree!” Sarah and Carrie agreed at once.

After dropping the gifts off at the church and agreeing to meet in the morning to wrap them all, Darby ran to another store. They had picked up picture books, but not any suitable for a seven year old reader. She also needed to get shoes for the girl. As she walked in the store, there was an aisle filled with toys. Bright red fire trucks caught Darby’s eye. Carrie really wanted the little boy to have a fire truck, but she wasn’t able to find one. So of course, the girl must have the tea set so they had equal gifts, right? After setting the items in her cart, she headed to search for suitable books and shoes. She decided to make homemade gingerbread men for the children also. Darby was so busy planning the perfect Christmas for the widow’s family, she forgot how lonely and useless she felt.

The next morning, as they met to wrap, Carrie admitted she shopped more also. She got a \$100 HEB gift card and a beautiful scarf for the grandmother. As they were wrapping and chatting away, Shelley came in with her arms full.

“Good morning, ladies!” Shelley dropped her load of Duplo sets, crayons, and markers on the table. “I just felt I wanted to help!”

“Wow, you got what we didn’t!” Sarah exclaimed. “Now they really do have everything!”

“Even cookies!” Darby showed her Christmas tin filled with decorated gingerbread men, Santa’s, Christmas trees, and candy canes. Peace filled her as she focused on helping others.

When all the gifts were wrapped, Darby let Pastor Bob know the gifts were ready to deliver. He was amazed at the generosity of the class going above and beyond anything he imagined. This grandmother was blessed.

.....

Karen put her grandchildren’s favorite show on TV and asked them to stay put while she talked to Pastor Bob without interruption. Pastor Bob said he was coming over to drop off Christmas. She would put whatever it was under her bed and keep her door shut. She silently thanked God for whatever was coming. She waited on her porch, not wanting her grandkids to hear the doorbell and be alerted Pastor Bob was here. She smiled as Pastor Bob stepped up.

“Hi Karen,” Pastor Bob’s eyes twinkled, “Are you ready?”

“Ready?” Karen looked confused.

“Where do you want the gifts?” Pastor Bob smiled.

“In my room.” Karen wondered why he just didn’t hand her the gifts.

Pastor Bob went to his car and pulled out a bike. Karen’s jaw dropped.

Then a large box with a picture of a toddler car on it was set down.

Dumbfounded, Karen said, “I think I need to open the garage.” She hurriedly did so, as Pastor Bob started pulling boxes and bags of gifts from his car. Karen watched as the corner of her garage filled with gifts. She couldn’t take her eyes off the shiny new bike and the riding toy car.

“That’s all of it. The snowman paper is for the boy, the Santa paper is for the girl, and the green paper is for you!” Pastor Bob grinned at Karen’s overwhelmed face, tears streaming down unbidden.

“It’s...it’s a miracle.” stammered Karen, tears streaming down her face. I didn’t know if my faith could hold up, but I trusted God-just a little.” She took a deep breath, struggling with her emotion. She looked at the bike and car surrounded by a multitude of other gifts. “And He provided a miracle....”

Karen reached over and gave Pastor Bob a heartfelt hug. “Please tell the saints who let God use them for this, I am forever grateful and thankful for them and to them.” Karen knew in her heart that whatever the future, she would manage just fine. God keeps His promises to never leave or forsake

you. While she felt bereft and forsaken, God worked behind the scenes to provide her a Christmas miracle.