

Reflection of the LAAMB

HAPPY NEW YEAR EVERYONE!!!!

The New Year makes me reflect back on this special year of 2020.

I hope all of you had a special Christmas this year, sprinkled with some meaningful experiences, especially, during this Pandemic. We kept hearing that this Christmas was going to be different. It certainly was different for me! I had been telling people that I wanted a white Christmas, especially, since right up till Christmas Eve, we had warm temperatures and some rain that had taken away all of our snow.

I was ecstatic on Christmas day, when I woke up, went downstairs and looked outside to see all the snow that had covered everything with its magical white blanket!!! “Beautiful”.....was the first word that came out of my mouth.

But as you all know, the next five days had even more snow. My neighbour said to me on that fourth day. You can turn that snow off now Perry...you had your white Christmas and we have all had enough of all this white stuffsome 25-30cm!

Well the snow wasn't my different experience this Christmas, we are all, usually, (especially those who live in the northern regions) used to seeing those wonderful mysterious white flakes come together.

I was excited for a different reason on Christmas morning. I had met a new friend, in his late seventies, on my 5:30am walks not long after the pandemic started in March. His house has a veranda on it. Often, I stopped to talk with him near the end of my walk. I would sit on one end of the open air veranda and he would sit on the other end. Sometimes, he would offer me a coffee. Now many of you know I don't usually drink coffee but I do have the odd cup once in a blue moon. Lately, I seem to be experiencing more blue moons! (two full moons in a month) than are on the calendar! Ha! So I thought of the perfect Christmas gift for my friend—a large can of coffee. Lore could appreciate the coffee gift because one morning she joined us for coffee and said, “now I know what Perry's talking about when comes home from his walk and says, “he had a early morning coffee on the veranda! It tastes better here!”

Back to that Christmas gift, Lore added some beautifully decorated Christmas cookies and the gift was complete all nicely wrapped. I knew that it was going to be a tough Christmas for my friend because he had told me that Christmas was all about family and friends. He grew up on a farm where Christmas wasn't about gifts rather it was about: relatives, friends-conversations, laughter, reminiscing and learning new things together! A lot of his relatives had died. He said, “it wasn't going to be Christmas for him this year because his three brothers and one sister who he usually meets up with at Christmas time, wouldn't be able to visit this year because of the lock down.

Well, there I was, beaming with excitement, walking through the beautiful white snow that covered my boots with this perfect Christmas gift in my hand. My friend was surprised by the gift saying, “you didn't have to do that!” Which I responded, “I wanted too, it makes me happy giving other people gifts and besides you haven't even seen what it is yet!” He listened and respected my way of expressing myself and thanked me for the gift. Then he said, “I want to show you something in my living room.” So putting my mask on, I followed him into the house. There in the living room I

saw this beautiful Christmas tree that was filled with pictures, mostly black and white but some were also in colour. The whole tree was filled with people's pictures. Then my friend said, "I want you to meet my family". By pointing to each picture and saying a few words, he introduced me to his mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, aunts, uncles and the list went on and on. After he finished, he sat down. I didn't say anything but just looked at the tree in astonishment and awe. Then I said, "thank you for introducing me to your family." Then I told him, "I have never seen a Christmas tree like this one before—a real family tree not one that you see written in books." Then we went back outside to the veranda and he sat at one end and I sat at the other. Then I started to ask him some questions about the people on the tree. One story led to another. Before we knew it, we were both reminiscing about Christmas' past. I found myself telling stories about my mother and father, my grandparents, uncles and aunts and the list went on.

Before I left, my friend turned to me and said, Merry Christmas Perry it has been a very good Christmas! Thank you!

I replied, Thank you! It has been a good Christmas for me too! I really enjoyed getting to know your family.

As I walked home, I thought, at the beginning of the early morning walk to his home, I thought I was bringing the perfect Christmas gift. However, the perfect gift was meeting his family and in our stories about our past Christmas' with our families. In a very real way I could relate to Mary and Joseph who had a different Christmas by getting to know some strangers who arrived to add to their Christmas experience.

Yes, it turned out to be a different Christmas in so many ways. My family picked names out of a hat this year for the very first time. We didn't know who gave us the gift till we opened it. For me, it made things much more meaningful. The gifts were so practical and filled with love. But more importantly, Lore and I were fortunate to have some of our children home with us. Not because they travelled but because they didn't have to....they were with us along the way throughout this special time. We spoke to Serena who was in New Market, on the phone, Christmas Day. It felt like she was in the room with us. This was her first Christmas away from home.

Afterwards in preparing the Christmas dinner, everyone had a part in helping. As we sat around the table, I appreciated even more so this year, those different experiences of Christmas. How fortunate I was to have my friend and long time wife, Lore, and my family alive, well and together with most of them. I was fortunate to have that time to recall those loving memories of Christmas' past with my loved ones that have gone on to meet our Creator. In a different way they were with me this Christmas. In a very strange way I found myself being thankful for the Pandemic. It had brought me all these different gifts this year and many more.

God is good! Christmas reminds us of that fact! Maybe, I can use some of God's goodness, as gifts for others in the New Year! Does Chocolate Count! Ha!

HAPPY NEW YEAR EVERYONE!!!!

Pastor Perry