



Chronicles of Diversity

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Chronicles of Diversity Contact Information:

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Blessings are priceless

The tree looks so perfect, symmetrical shape, 1400 branch tips, 650 clear mini lights, 21 bubble lights, and 30 electrical candles, along with a few new, but many old ornaments, some dating back to the beginning of my adult life. All the new stuff, from the tree down to the purple, crimson, and ivory balls were purchased at least half off, within the last few days. I suppose, in tribute to some incantation of our consumer age.

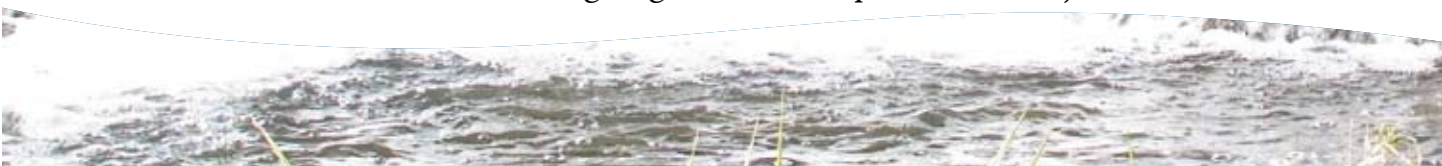
I never thought I would have a fake Christmas tree. But now it doesn't seem to be such an awful thing. For about the last five years I have had a living Christmas tree, in a large white pot. This spring this root bound Fraser Fir, was looking the worse for wear and is now planted near Priest Lake, its living future in doubt.

As a couple of my friends have remarked, it will be a treat to open the tree just after Thanksgiving and leave it up

until after New Years, no hassle, no fuss, no potential for fire. At least if all the UL ratings on everything are not pirated. Besides, some entity must be receiving an economic profit from shipping all this stuff from China to the USA.

But half price merchandise is really a two edged gift, it really cannot be considered a blessing. Tangible stuff is given and received, but always has some monetary value associated with it's creation, usage, and disposal. Stuff of the intangible nature, may fit this description also, but as things get more complex and complicated, the stuff nature maybe left behind and these things can be recreated into blessings.

You will notice the The Order of Wilderness Stuff Trekkers International is no longer present, because put very simply, blessings are not stuff, because they are priceless. Whether we will rejoin TOWSTI after this



message I do not now know. But this I do know, I have learned a great deal about handling my stuff during this period. This has become a small blessing to me, and hopefully it has done the same for you.

I overheard a remark this week about what Christmas means to you, or to me, depending upon who you and me really are. My thoughts were, especially after this year of operations and doctors, that Christmas is really a time, not for stuff, but a time to remember your priceless blessings. Because of our recent stuff trekking efforts, immediately two times in my life jumped to the foreground as profound blessings. Priceless blessings, the substance that binds life all together into an unique oneness, or should be the goal, or the ultimate purpose of our life.

My dad was both my grade school and high school principal. He took the job as my high school principal as much as an opportunity to get me an athletic scholarship as he did to get a promotion. To condense the story significantly, after my junior year in high school our excellent coach was pressured by community leaders, to look for other employment, because basketball success was the yardstick by which coaching prowess was measured. This was made even more difficult because our football tailback had received a full athletic scholarship to WSU.

Because I was the principals kid, I had the opportunity to help coach clean out some of his stuff as he packed to go to his new school. It was a candid moment during that time, that he remarked how he had mixed feelings about leaving, pressure or no community pressure. Small school coaches that can get anyone a Division I athletic scholarship are a rarity, and this ability is usually a stepping stone to bigger and better jobs.

It was at that time he said that he knew I had the competitive ability to compete in any sport at any level, and because of my gift he was reluctant to leave. If I could excel in either football or baseball, he said he would have stayed. But that fall I had blown out a knee in football, and in those days it was much more serious than it is today, and baseball, wasn't really

my gift. Basketball wasn't his gift, and he commented that I already knew more about basketball than he did.

As a coming high school senior, and because of my dad's position, I knew some of the local politics and limitations involved. It was about that time that the inch thick, U of W catalog went back to the school library. Without knowing anything about Seattle or the U, or anyone who even lived in the area, going to college in the big city was impossible without that scholarship.

I recalled this high school episode last year as I watched the Husky women go to the NCAA tournament, and the Husky men show the discipline of the street ball players down here in the hood. Simply because a number of them were from the hood, and they were more interested in showboating than winning.

But in the last few months, after I have recovered from the replacement of my aortic heart valve and my body as assimilated my eternal synthetic ascending aorta, I have come to the conclusion that not being able to compete in my dream to become a famous athlete, is the greatest tangible blessing of my life. On this side of eternity, whether this congenital defect had anything to do with God's grace of giving me this blessing really does not matter. I may not know any of the reasons why God would bless me so, and it has taken so long to understand even the beginnings of this blessing.

Fame is a gift of this world, as such, some can, to a limited degree, adapt and use it as a stepping stone of life, it however does extract a worldly price. But having that famous gift, would mean that the blessing of an eternal perspective would by necessity become less apparent.

If you ain't got fame, you are nobody. Fame is the world's number one blessing. If you ain't got fortune you are poor. Fortune must be blessing number two. Fame and Fortune both begin with the sixth letter and follow in alphabetic succession. There in lies two legs of the Revelation mark of the beast. Perhaps Fun should be placed at the end of the progression, but then we would see that most of the world already has obtained the beast's mark.

I had a shot at fortune too. Not this paper wealth of the entrepreneurs of today, but real wealth, that

has ageless worth. Gold, real, pure, forever coveted and addictive. If you work around people in the business of gold and you find most of their lives are controlled by the hope of the mother lode, just over the next hill, or if we had the money to just drill another few feet.

Working in the gold business cost me all the money I had acquired until that time, but that was because I was undercapitalized, not that I had been infected with gold fever. I still find it sad but amusing, that otherwise normal, rational adults, would give up everything, to embrace corruption and to chase that dream of incorruptible wealth.

Along the path of fortune I have had the opportunity to meet and associate with some wealthy people. The only ones who were not depressing to be around, held their wealth lightly and looked at making money as sort of a real life Monopoly game. But just as in the game, they really did nothing of eternal value with their wealth. Houses, hotels, railroads, utilities, and counting your money was the game. The structure of their enterprise may have been far removed from the truth of the real estate game, but still the rules of the game applied, buy low, sell high, keep your investment to a minimum, and during the deal never let them see you sweat.

Business enterprise, in a lot of ways is like athletics. Just that the game is a lot slower, and no one recognizes, at least consciously, when the final whistle blows everyone will head for the eternal showers. Too me that blind pass to a back door cutter for a lay in is still much more rewarding, because it deals with other human personalities in a team undertaking. And I really don't understand how only the great teams are coached to play defense against such obvious opportunities.

Along that line, and for those of you not in the states, Microsoft has a new set of television commercials promoting the benefits of the new Office. Again just like the Washington men's round ball squad, the autistic sic slam dunk when trailing by twenty, shows a complete lack of comprehension of what the game is all about. In this Microsoft case, it is the same type of showboating of the individual personality,

as greater than the team, which is the reward of modern enterprise. Maybe, just maybe, it is a Seattle thing. No it isn't, it is about me, again with poor coaching.

Regarding fortune, not having it is a blessing much more eternal than the need to secure that wealth from those who don't play by the recognized rules. In my golden adventure, I did make the conscious choice to move on, that too has blossomed into a tremendous blessing.

Being able to write this weekly column is fun, but not in the same way that the world would consider fun. For example, it was fun to add fun, to fame and fortune above. Hopefully, I shall be able to tie in that fun addition to the priceless blessings of God in our lives. All blessings greatly surpassing any of the gifts the stuff of this world passes off as the important destinations in our lives. For example, when I started this message, I had some concept of this third point, but I wasn't going to describe it as "not having fun in a worldly way."

Consistent with this unusual fun, this morning I needed to get a refill for my heart medication, at the same time I had a couple of things to return that I thought I might need, but was unable to use. So I started out early to avoid the rush. Things were going so well, the half hour or more usually required to refill the prescription only took about ten minutes. When I arrived at my destination for my second return the man did not know how to process a return, and on Christmas Eve day there was no one to ask how to make the computer do what was needed. He said he would work on it and I should go and get the other thing I needed from the company and when I returned hopefully he would have figured something out.

When I returned, he interrupted what he was doing with another customer to tell me that he wasn't able to get my return solved. As we talked I noticed that the other person was purchasing the same part I was returning but his was already installed. Now here is a fun idea, why don't you give me your money to buy my part, and take my receipt. Then that computer will never know that you were here to buy a part, that I sold to you. We will put my part, which was still in the package, back on the shelf. Everyone was happy, and everyone can go home and have a Merry Christmas.

So on Christmas Eve, this week we see that stuff and gifts come with a price. Sometimes a price much in excess of their material cost. But sometimes God can turn the material into a priceless blessing. The celebration of Christmas is such a holiday.

There is no historic evidence that the birth of Jesus took place near the winter solstice. Some evidence suggests that it took place during the Feast of Tabernacles in the fall, that based upon Jesus fulfilling all of the Jewish Law. It is known that December 25th was chosen so that Jesus could be circumcised on New Years Day. Not a bad way to convey the reality the true priceless blessing to illiterate men and women. For however we slice the meat at Christmas, and no matter the animal its source, there remains this truth, the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the substance of all priceless blessings on this earth. They can be common blessings or spiritual blessings, but Christmas celebrates in reality the absolute of all priceless blessings.

Have a very Merry and Blessed Christmas!