

## Changing Our Christmas Perspectives

By Mary Lambrecht, M.S. LMFT

Christmastime for my brother Ted and I included a trip to my grandparent's house. In this comfortable farmhouse, French doors separated the living room from the parlor. The parlor at other times of the year was a mere extension of the living room. At the coming of winter however, the parlor was given a special assignment: it was the room where the Christmas tree stood. The glass panes of the parlor doors bent and danced with the glorious colored lights, beckoning Ted and I to come close. If we pressed our noses to the pane, the brilliant light-dance would steady, helping us to ponder more clearly the Night Before Christmas. But unlike the dancing lights, one element of this room was unchanging. A massive bear rug hung on the wall of the parlor: our grandfather's hunting trophy. When we were very young, this bear rug kept Ted and me at bay. We listened with awe to our Grandpa's retelling of his bear hunt and gave due respect to his victory hanging on the wall. But on Christmas Eve the parlor door opened, and bravely Ted and I shielded our eyes from the bear and entered that coveted room.

In the Old Testament, the Holy of Holies was a sacred place within the tabernacle where only the high priest could enter once a year. Like the door that separated my grandfather's parlor from other rooms, a veil separated the Holy of Holies. Here was a place where God's presence was so intense, that all the high priest could do was to simply experience His glory. Only one thing could prohibit the priest from experiencing God's glory within this place, and that was sin. Thus a sin offering, usually a bull or a ram, made atonement for the priest's sins.

Many of us desire entry into the wonder of Christmas. We want to be invited through the parlor doors, unencumbered by fears or sin and allow His light to outshine the tree lights. Eventually the fear of that black bear rug needed to be conquered. Only then could my brother and I boldly step into Grandpa's Christmas room. The Holy of Holies was also a place set apart. It is almost ludicrous to compare the Holy of Holies with any place here on earth. How unimaginable it must have been for the high priest to be allowed the opportunity to purify his flesh, so that he could enter this holy place. Though there was unspeakable wonder in this, Hebrews 9:14 states; "how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

Ask Jesus for boldness this Christmas to do away with things that do not promote Godly, life-giving thoughts and behaviors with ourselves and others. Experience the freedom and joy that can come only from Him. The shed blood of Jesus is our parlor door into the very heart of God. Christmas may bring the reception of many gifts into our homes. But our Mediator promises that "those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance" (Hebrews 9:15). This blessed

season take the next step to come into the Holy of Holies. Come into Christmas with the wonder of the Living God.

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