

Isaiah 35:1-10

“The day better than Christmas”

“The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, ² it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon; they will see the glory of the LORD, the splendor of our God.

³ “Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; ⁴ say to those with fearful hearts, ‘Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you.’

⁵ Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. ⁶ Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. ⁷ The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs. In the haunts where jackals once lay, grass and reeds and papyrus will grow. ⁸ And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness; it will be for those who walk on that Way. The unclean will not journey on it; wicked fools will not go about on it.

⁹ No lion will be there, nor any ravenous beast; they will not be found there. But only the redeemed will walk there, ¹⁰ and those the LORD has rescued

will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.”

If you had one wish today, what would you ask?

Once you’ve finished reading the following story, would you consider changing your wish or your plans?



Just One Wish

Fox River

McHenry, Illinois.

Homes were scattered here and there—mostly summer homes and retirement homes.

At the very end of the road three houses all faced one another. Three sisters—all single, all seniors—lived in one of the homes. Across the way their widowed first cousin lived in a yellow house. Next to her lived their brother, Bill, and his wife, Cleo.

Cleo had multiple sclerosis, so the pair had moved to Colby Point seeking a quiet, relaxed life.

Little did they know when they relocated to this serene area that they would end up rearing their granddaughter, Margie.

Before long, the once-quiet neighborhood became active with the sounds of a child. Margie always looked forward to the arrival of Christmas, and this year was no different as winter began to settle like a warm blanket.

Everyone was in a flurry, for at the church Margie and her family attended, the congregation was preparing to share their Christmas wishes with each other. Since Cleo couldn't make it to church, and Bill didn't like to leave her alone for too long, he dropped Margie off at church early on Sunday mornings; the aunts would bring her home.

As Margie sat in church that morning, she rehearsed in her mind over and over what she would say. She wasn't afraid, for she knew what an important wish this was. The service seemed to drag on and on. Finally the minister uttered the words Margie had been anticipating all morning, "This is a special time of year when everyone around the world celebrates peace and goodwill toward our fellow man. This year, we want to hear your Christmas wishes. We cannot fill everyone's wish, but we would like to try and fill a few. As I call your name, please come forward and tell us about your Christmas wish."

One after another, the church members shared their wishes, large and small. Margie was the last and the youngest to speak. As she looked out at the congregation, she spoke confidently, "I would like for my grandma to have church. She cannot walk, and she and my grandpa have to stay at home. They miss coming so much. So that is what I wish for. And please don't tell them, for it needs to be a surprise."

Riding home with her aunts, Margie could tell they were speaking in low tones about her wish. She hoped that they would keep her secret.

As the next Sunday came around, Margie was getting ready for church when Grandma asked, 'Why are you so fidgety? You haven't sat still all morning.'

"I just know that something wonderful is going to happen today!"

"Of course it will," said her grandma with a chuckle, "It's almost Christmas, you know."

Grandpa was getting on his coat when he happened to look out the front window. He saw some cars coming down the dirt road one after another.

Now at this time of year there wasn't too much traffic, so this was really amazing. Margie pushed her grandma to the window so that she could see all the cars. Pretty soon the cars were parked all up and down the road as far as a person could see.

Grandpa looked at Grandma, and they both looked at Margie. Grandpa asked, "Just what did you wish for, Margie?"

"I wished that you and Grandma could have church. And I just knew that it would come true. Look! There's the minister, and everyone from church is coming up the walk"

The congregation arrived with coffee and cookies and cups and gifts. They sang Christmas carols and listened to the minister speak on giving to others the gifts that God gives. Later that night, Margie slipped

out the back door and walked outside to look up. "Thank you," she whispered, "thank you for giving me my wish."

That was just one of the many wishes granted for Margie as she grew up. Her childhood overflowed with the love of her grandparents, four great aunts and many wise, caring neighbors. Margie was truly a blessed little girl. I should know—I was that little girl. *Margaret E. Mack*

We pray that God's grace, His Word, and His Spirit will bring you much joy and hope this Christmas Season!



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