

“Thanks for the Memories”

*Over the river, and through the wood,
To grandmother’s house we go;
The horse knows the way
To carry the sleigh
Through the white and drifted snow.*

This is one of the most popular poems/songs about Thanksgiving. I wonder if anyone has ever had such an idyllic experience. Certainly as time passes it becomes more the stuff of a Currier and Ives print than an actual memory.

We may imagine making such a Thanksgiving journey, but I remember going to grandma’s in the family’s 1963 Buick Le Sabre (our version of the sleigh). It was only three-miles to my maternal grandmother’s home. It was never snowy at this time of year in Virginia, but the song still felt just right. There was anticipation and happiness in the idea of going to our grandma’s house and eating grandma’s cooking.

Nowadays my Thanksgiving Day trek is to my mother’s house (where I grew up) in my yellow 2005 MINI (hardly a sleigh, more like a sled). It is not as quick a trip, but it gives me time to put aside my daily life in order to prepare for being home. Now it is not my grandmother or mother who has done most of the food preparation. That usually falls to my sister. Since she has retired (how can it be that my **little** sister is already retired?) she can arrive earlier in the week, and take her time with cooking instead of trying to do it all in one day. My responsibilities are opening the wine, saying the blessing, and after the feast to washing the dishes.

Thanksgiving is not the idyll of my childhood, but it is still a wonderful homecoming. It is a time of sharing. It is a time of gratefulness for the blessings of the year. It is a time of gratefulness for the trials of the year. Yes we can be thankful that we have made it through the trials and are once again together as a family.

It is also a time for memories of those years of going to grandma's house. There are also memories of gathering walnuts from the lot next door and cracking them with my dad in the driveway. There are memories of mom cooking in the kitchen while she tried to get a view of the Macy's parade on the black & white TV in the living room. There are memories of whipped potatoes, peas and pearl onions, turkey, stuffing and gravy, pumpkin pie, and the first Christmas specials of the year. We make memories at holidays and as time goes by our memories make our holidays.

I pray that between the parades, football games, turkey, pie and your other holiday traditions and memories, you will make time for gratitude. Gratitude for family, friends, the harvest, the good earth, the sky of blue, the hope that we see in ground gone fallow, memories, and the love of God who so richly blesses you.

Finally, as it is written in the Letter to the Hebrews, "do not forget to do good and share what you have"¹ for there are many whose memories will not sustain them. They need each of us to share our memories and our abundance that they might have a bit of Thanksgiving in their lives too. Bless them and yourself as you make new memories of abundance shared with all of God's family.

¹ Hebrews 13:16