

Lighting the Christmas Tree

~by Kimberly

When I was a naïve pre-teen and my parents were still married to each other, they decided that they would be happier and life would be better with a bigger house. So they thought and fought and drew up plans and a great hole was excavated directly behind and butting up to the existing foundation. A door in the current family room was opened up, allowing for a basement with several rooms and a huge family room over it to be built—with a gigantic ceiling and a wall of windows along one side.

The room was so large that, along with the furniture, there was still quite a bit of area to run and play. And, at Christmas time, of course, the grandest tree needed to be found so that it would not be dwarfed by the grandeur of the space.

So, after thinking and planning, a neighbor family caravanned with us up to the White Mountains for the “treasure” hunt. We spent some time trotting and searching, finally finding the perfect tree. No, it was not—see that gaping hole there? With all the windows, the tree must make a presentation from every angle. So, more trudging and trekking, spills and strained nerves, until...it was found!

After (nearly) unanimous approval (mostly because of growling stomachs), and long after our neighbors had found theirs, the hacking and sawing and dragging and lifting and tying down were executed.

We filled our empty stomachs, made the journey home, put the cranky toddlers to bed, and then...the real dilemma began.

The store-bought tree-stand was not large enough for the girth of this King. My father, silently cursing the whole affair, creatively executed a home-made contraption. It was accepted because it would do the job, but primarily because it would do the job and be hidden by the beautiful, hand-sewn tree-skirt.

Since my dad was not qualified to string the lights (having proven himself inept in that department in previous years), my mom began the monumental task of flooding the Great Green Giant with radiance—by herself. After misplacing the patience at her disposal, and demanding all the audience but me go to bed and leave her alone, she finally gave up herself, and stormed out of the room.

Dad, trying to save the day, and recollecting the scattered phrases of “tree-lighting-commands,” did his best to:

1. *inspect and make sure all bulbs are in proper working order before beginning the trimming*
2. *the trunk must be wrapped with lights first*
3. *no wiring must show*
4. *every branch must be lit*
5. *no bare spots are permitted*

When mom made her re-appearance, scanned the scene and ascertained that the current job in process was an utter failure, the light strings were hastily yet gingerly removed.

And...mom did it all by herself. No one knows how she did it, for, thankfully, none of us were allowed to watch.

But...after some time we were called back in to the now-dark room, and...the lights came on.

*Awe
Relief
Grandeur
Spectacle
Reverence
Radiance*

The denouement, though grand itself, was the decorating of the tree with the many varied glitzy and homespun novelties called "ornaments". When the entire ordeal was over, I would sit and marvel, dream and admire the beauty of that tree.

It is now many years hence. Much of the naivete of my youth has been transformed through experience. Scores of trees have personally been lit in the interim. Each year, the attention to detail has been given. At least, I've satisfied myself.

Never has a tree been as dramatic. In fact, the drama and size of the trees have been petering down significantly to its current state of being able to be propped up on a table in the corner of the room, the pre-lit tree purchased from Costco. And yet, in contrast to the size of the tree in the room, the Christmas tree in my heart has grown so that the heart itself has had to dig way down and expand itself, with a vaulted ceiling that has outgrown my physical body.

However, I now realize that this "Christmas tree", the Real One, has a quality that that former had not: though planted in my heart, this living tree has the ability to grow roots that dig down deep in the fertile soil of past experiences and find the fount of living water, connecting itself to the life-blood and source of all nourishment, thus becoming a "tree springing up unto everlasting life." The

warmth exuded by the lights on the bedecked tree has become nearly palpable to not only myself, but also, any “Peeping Toms.”

Now, as the “holy-day” is felt at all times, year-round, my heart anticipates the true **“light of the world”** to flood the ever-green branches of (figurative) *****“evergreen trees”** throughout the world. The expectation of the global “Christmas Morning” that knows no denomination is of cosmic proportions. Oh, will the grand moment ever arrive? Will it be long before the delights of “ooh” and “aah” fill the halls in grand exclamation at the worldwide scene of warmth and beauty—and **light**?

In preparation for the “lighting ceremony”, I reflect over the commands:

1. inspect and make sure all bulbs are in proper working order before beginning the trimming
2. the trunk must be wrapped with lights first
3. no wiring must show
4. every branch cluster must be lit
5. no bare spots are permitted

Just perhaps, no matter how the *****“man”** tries, he is just not capable of executing the “vision” to quality specifications. Perhaps it is the *****“mother,”** alone, in the dark, having regained her patience and resolve, who somehow works her miracle and fills the trunk, each branch and cluster, with brilliant white sparkles of radiating light; shining and filling the grandeur of the appointed space and spilling out through the glass panes to the great reaches beyond.

Awe
Relief
Grandeur
Spectacle
Reverence
Radiance

LIGHT

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\*The **tree** is often symbolically used to represent “mankind.” Although the “evergreen” is commonly used in “christian” decorations of the season and is an appropriate representation of a life that is never “barren” or “dead,” of additional significance, I believe, is the olive tree. This, also, has been specifically singled out as highly representative of the human race. What follows are some little-known facts of growing healthy “olive trees.”

**Olive Tree** is used figuratively as the “fruit” (works) of the “gospel” (a life dedicated to living the injunction of ‘do unto others as you would have others do unto you.’)

*The olive tree often grows on poor and dry soils, but gives remarkable results on rich soils or by irrigation. Olive trees are very useful to maintain the soil and fight against erosion or desertification. That is why olive growers have always planted the olive groves onto terraces with sustaining dry stone walls. In August, the seeds are very thickly sown, at low depth in a running soil; the seedbed should be bathed regularly.*

*The second year, the best-grown plants are bedded. When they reach the size of a small finger, they are grafted onto the chosen variety. A trunk in very bad shape should be cut at the base in order to start with three replacing shoots. The life span of an olive tree is indeed extraordinary. The tree simply does not die, accidents put aside. It may be necessary to rejuvenate an olive grove if it has not been maintained for a long period or if it has suffered accidents, thus becoming unable to produce a normal crop. It is sufficient to cut away all branches, except the largest ones, and then graft the remaining stumps.*

*The grove should then bear a unique variety of table olives and be capable of bearing fruit in excellent conditions. Picking is done by hand, with the utmost care.”*

**\*\*Man and mother are used symbolically here, representing the analytical, take-care-of-business with my “head” “fallen” creature, devoid of its original light, versus the compassionate, nurturing, seeing-the-whole being who brings forth the light/ sun/”son” through the “womb” of the “heart.”**

**‘KNOW YE NOT THAT YE ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD....?’**